



INDIAN LIFE

Religious and Social

BY

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To

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL GEORGE CHESNEY.

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MILITARY MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE VICEROY OF INDIA,

This Volume is,

WITH PERMISSION, INSCRIBED,

AS A TRIBUTE OF ADMIRATION AND RESPECT,

BY HIS OBLIGED AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

have come in my way of gaining an insight into the mode of life and habits of thought of the humbler ranks of the community. In Part II. of this volume I have recorded, from personal knowledge, many particulars connected with the somewhat peculiar domestic life of the lower orders, which may help English readers towards accurate conceptions regarding the lives and ideas of many millions of men and women in British India.

J. C. O.

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I.

*YOGIS AND MAHATMAS, THE
SAGES OF INDIA.*

"The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world.
The Roman tempest swelled and swelled,
And on her head was hurled.

The East bowed low before the blast,
In patient, deep disdain :
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again."

A SWOLLEN river rushing brimful, with rapid and audible current, past town and hamlet, past field and forest, is a sight that has attractions for most people. And the old *Hydrantes* of Greek geographers—the Ravi—big with the melted snows of the Himalayas and the rain of the wide plains of the Panjab, is as good a river to watch in flood as many another: so on a Sunday in July I took a drive from Lahore to see the rush of water by the bridge of boats, for I knew the river was pretty full at that time.

Passing the European cemetery and the Taksali gate of the city, my way lay behind the stately mosque of Aurangzeb, with its marble domes gleam-

the leader of the party, there was about his appearance neither the emaciation of person one might expect to see in a professed ascetic, nor the absent, self-concentred look one would be prepared to find in a devotee given to severe and long-continued contemplation. He was apparently between thirty-five and forty years of age, in excellent condition, and apparently in vigorous health, with the commanding presence, easy carriage, and self-possessed manner of one accustomed to the homage of men. Round about him, in picturesque disorder, were groups of men, women, and children, seated on the ground as close to his feet as possible. Three yogis repeating some Sanskrit *Mantras*,^{*} probably quite unintelligible to themselves, were walking rapidly round the saint and then round the fire at which their companions were seated. A diminutive tent erected under the general canopy contained some Hindu idols—grotesque representations of the Deity—which two men were fanning in a listless sort of way.

* “Mantra—a hymn of invocation or form of prayer in the Sanskrit language. Mantras are used in the performance of every religious rite. They are of various sorts, invocatory, evocatory, deprecatory, conservatory. They are beneficent or hurtful, salutary or pernicious. By means of them, it is believed that great and various effects may be produced. Some are for casting out evil spirits, some inspiring love or hatred, for curing diseases or bringing them on, for causing death or averting it. Some are of a contrary nature to others, and counteract their effect—the stronger overcoming the influence of the weaker. Some are potent enough, it is said, to occasion the destruction of a whole army, while there are others which the gods themselves are constrained to obey.”—Garrett’s “Classical Dictionary of India”

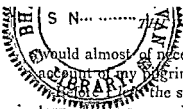
interview with the famous saint brought about a favourable change in the sick child's condition; or maybe the story is, after all, only one of those very doubtful ones which spring up and cluster round every religious teacher or famous ascetic.

I had taken up a convenient position just outside the enclosure when I overheard a native address another in English, evidently with the object of attracting my attention. I entered into conversation with him about the yogis, and gleaned the following particulars with regard to them. The chief man, the centre of attraction, was a native of Lahore, who had been away some twelve years engaged, according to popular belief, in deep, ecstatic contemplation and the most impossible austerities. He had now come back to his native place with all the prestige of sainthood about him. Certainly the hardships he had voluntarily endured had left no trace upon his person. And perhaps this fact was, to his admirers, only a more convincing proof of his sanctity and power. In conversing with me my informant expressed his regret at the ignorance and superstition of the common people, as if to draw the line between himself and the vulgar herd. Superstition, however, is an Old Man of the Sea not to be easily shaken off, and I am very much mistaken if a threatened curse from the yogi he affected to condemn would not have reduced my loquacious friend to a state of abject terror, for every Indian knows how direful and irrevocable are curses proceeding from the mouth of one who has obtained super-human power by the practice of austerities.

This remarkable and peculiarly Hindu notion,

which deserves attention in connection with the subject of yogis, has been made familiar to the English reader by Southey, who, in his poem "The Curse of Kehama," has worked out the subject with much skill and force.

When the great yogi had his attention drawn to me he rose and approached the spot where I was standing, carrying in his hands a present, consisting of two mangoes and half a cocoa-nut. I accepted his gift with a *salaam*, but believing that the rules of Oriental etiquette required, in such a case, some return, however trifling, I told the saint that I had no money ("rupees") with me to make a suitable requital for his courtesy. He put on a deprecating smile, raised his hands above his head, and, in an exceedingly natural and graceful attitude, gave me his benediction, observing, with reference to my remark, and in truly Oriental phrase, that "by my favour he was sufficiently rich." When I was about to withdraw, another yogi came up, with garlands of flowers taken off the saint's neck, and placed them in my hands. My casual visit to the yogi has, I have little doubt, been already exaggerated into a devout pilgrimage. Probably while I write this, stories are passing from mouth to mouth regarding the *Sahib* who came deliberately to pay his respects to the yogi and made him most valuable offerings. That I could have come that way merely for a morning drive, or for the pleasure of looking at the rushing river, did not, in all probability, occur to any soul present, and so the assembled crowd must, and most naturally too, have connected my presence there with the yogi's fame, while the little ceremony of the benediction, which



would almost of necessity find a place in an Oriental account of my pilgrimage to the renowned ascetic.

Before I left the spot, three young yogis, with a large dog as companion, proceeded from the enclosure apparently on a begging expedition to the city. All three were well fed, in good condition, and full of animal spirits, as was evident from the brisk and boyish scamper with which they started on their pleasant and profitable errand.

On my return home the presents I had received from the yogi were begged for eagerly by my servants to whom the *syce* (groom) had related my morning's adventure. One of them gave expression to the opinion, shared no doubt by his fellows, that my good luck was boundless in having been thus favoured by the great yogi, whose fame was spread far and wide. So widely, indeed, had his fame extended, and so great had been his success, that he had, on more than one occasion, been able to feast a vast number of the city people, both *Hindus* and *Muhammadians*, on the open plain near his pavilion. I was told that several college students had partaken of the yogi's hospitality. Those who had done so did not relish my knowing the fact, but could not conceal from me that they secretly entertained a superstitious respect for the successful ascetic.

That the yogi had achieved a great reputation in Lahore was indisputable. Speaking of him, an educated native¹ remarked to me, that not the least

¹ By the term *educated native* is meant, throughout this book, the native who has been educated in European learning and science through the medium of the English language, this being the meaning now universally attached to the term in India.

"miraculous" act of the yogi, was feeding the multitude when he had not a rupee to call his own. "Who," he asked, "could, without supernatural power, have induced the stingy *bunneahs* and close-fisted *shahajans* to open their stores and supply him (as they certainly had done), without money and without price?" The obvious answer, from a European point of view, that superstitious dread of the yogi's power was quite sufficient to account for his success with the ignorant tradesfolk, did not find favour with my Hindu friend, who, with characteristic leaning towards the supernatural and mystical, preferred his own explanation of the yogi's influence in the Lahore bazaar.

To obviate the production of any false impression on the reader's mind by the foregoing narrative, I must state that there are hundreds of yogis in India very unlike those well-nourished and worldly-wise saints who treated me with so much courtesy on the banks of the Ravi. Indeed, there are yogis who have deliberately cut themselves off from all interest in the active pursuits of life. Seldom appearing in the busy haunts of men, these devotees practise rigid self-denial, undergo the most painful self-inflicted tortures, and spend their lives in solitary contemplation.

Every one who has seen much of India must have come across some of these ascetics, living skeletons, almost naked, and overlaid with dirt and ashes. Sometimes they are to be met with seated in the midst of five fires, four smouldering round them and the fifth—the sun—pouring its fierce rays upon their unclothed bodies, from a sky that looks like

brass. In remote out-of-the-way places the traveller may occasionally see a yogi, with an arm, attenuated and quite rigid, upraised above his matted locks, or with hands so long closed that the growing nails have penetrated the lifeless flesh. These are certainly rare, though I have come across one or two in my time. If current belief is to be trusted, the solitudes of the jungle and the lone caverns of the Himalayas are tenanted by many earnest yogis, who have retired as far as possible from the world and its distractions.

To the ordinary European, whether resident or tourist, these ascetics are incomprehensible¹ and loathsome;² but the Indian sees them with very different eyes, and regards them with very different feelings. To the Hindu the yogi is both a saint and a philosopher. Indeed it may not be too much to say that a comprehension of the ideas which underlie the practices of the yogis is indispensable to the student of the spiritual and religious side, which is by far the most important side, of Indian life and character. Save in their voluntary penances and self-inflicted tortures, the yogis bear no resemblance to the Christian anchorites who, in the early centuries of our era, weighed down by a sense of their own unworthiness, and awed by the expected approaching destruction of the world, fled to the

¹ "To me these men are living enigmas, and I look in vain for the sphinx who can or will give me the clue."—Baron Hubner's "Through the British Empire," vol. ii. pp. 173-174.

² "... for their reverence of such degraded, filthy, naked, and unclean beasts, as these fakirs, there is simply no excuse."—"Two Years in the Jungle," by William T. Hornaday, p. 86

much as question them about their lives or past history ;¹ but invent and believe the most ridiculous stories about them. An Indian, himself a believer in the yogis, writing about certain members of this order, says they are "objects of great reverence to the ignorant hill-tribes living in the neighbourhood, who fear that the yogis may assume the forms of tigers and eat them up."²

Amongst Hindus trained in European modes of thought, and more or less acquainted with the results of European science, a goodly number unhesitatingly reject the pretensions of the yogis. Some, while believing that the Yoga system is true, are persuaded that, in these degenerate times, no one is able to act up to it. But, on the other hand, many Hindus of marked ability profess undoubting belief in the reality of the so-called Yog-science and in the existence of adepts or *mahatmas* at the present day. As for the ignorant millions, without knowledge of *yoga-vidya*, its objects, or its practices, they have an unfaltering faith in the power of the yogi, and venerate him accordingly, with the reverence that is born of dread. The system seems to have had its attractions for even so sceptical a mind as that of the great *Akbar*, regarding whom Professor H. H. Wilson says: "He wore his hair after their fashion, and anticipated the liberation of his soul by the fontanelle as they (the yogis) teach."³ But it may be added that *Akbar's* admiration of the yoga system did not prevent his allowing a pitched battle in his presence between the rival sects of the Sannyasis

¹ "Theosophist," vol. i. pp 90-92

² *Ibid.* p 92.

³ "Essays," vol. ii. p. 395.

and Yogis, which (notwithstanding their superhuman powers) ended in the complete discomfiture of the latter.¹

Let us not, however, turn away from the yogi with contemptuous indifference on account of his preposterous pretensions, for naked, emaciated, and covered with ashes though he be, he represents, albeit in an unhealthy form, an important idea. In the grovelling world of polytheistic India, he stands forth a bold and ever-present asserter of man's inherent dignity and exalted position in the universe. Before the multitude cowering in abject terror at the altars of hideous and terrible idols, he appears as an embodiment of the belief that man, even though he be degraded and trammelled by his fleshly garment, can by his own exertions raise himself to divine heights of knowledge and power. The yogi is also highly interesting as a living exemplification of the attitude, since time immemorial, of the Indian mind towards life and nature; of the world weariness which has oppressed the East since ages before the dawn of European history, and caused her sons to fly from the struggles and pleasures of life to the quiet retreat of the jungle, and to seek in a living death an escape from the disquieting, and to them unbearable, activity of thought itself.

It was probably during the Macedonian invasion that the European world made its first direct and personal acquaintance with the Indian anchorites, when one of them, the naked Dandamis, reclining on his bed of leaves, treated with scornful indiffer-

¹ Sir H. Elliot's "Muhammadan Historians of India," by Dunsen, vol. v. p. 318.

ence the haughty messengers of Alexander, bidding them go tell their master: "Dandamis has no need of aught that is yours, and therefore will not go to you, but if you want anything from Dandamis come you to him."¹ That event occurred more than two thousand years ago. But for centuries prior to the Macedonian invasion India had been *par excellence* the land of anchorites, and during the long interval, from the days of Alexander to the present time, has produced an abundant crop of hermits, misanthropes, and mystics. Some of the grandest figures in Indian epic poetry are the anchorites, who, according to the poets, were in their day a terror to the gods themselves.

Writing in the middle of the ninth century of our era, the Mussulman historian Abu Zaid said:

"In India there are persons who, in accordance with their profession, wander in the woods and mountains, and rarely communicate with the rest of mankind. Sometimes they have nothing to eat but herbs and the fruits of the forest. . . . Some of them go about naked. Others stand naked with the face turned to the sun, having nothing on but a panther's skin. In my travels I saw a man in the position I have described; sixteen years afterwards I returned to that country and found him in the same posture. What astonished me was that he was not melted by the heat of the sun."²

Succeeding historians down to our own time have referred to or described the Indian ascetics, for they have ever been a noteworthy feature in the Indian

¹ J. W. McCrindle's "Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian," p. 126.

² Sir H. Elliot's "History of India as told by its own Historians," vol. i. p. 6.

world. Here is a modern picture which I present to the reader as of interest from more than one point of view :

"Wolff went also with Mr Wilson to see one of the celebrated Yoghees, who was lying in the sun in the street, the nails of whose hands were grown into his cheek, and a bird's nest upon his head. Wolff asked him, 'How can one obtain the knowledge of God?' He replied, 'Do not ask me questions; you may look at me, for I am God.' Wolff indignantly said to him, 'You will go to hell if you speak in such a way.'"

All, however, who practise austerities are not necessarily yogis; nor need they be actuated by the yogi's desire to attain utter unconsciousness of his individual existence by identification with the Universal Spirit.

Here and there, all over India, may be seen men who practise, or pretend that they have practised, austerities for their purification from guilt and the ultimate attainment of beatitude. And there are, no doubt, in the ranks of the ascetics many disappointed men for whom the battle of life has been too hot, and who have taken refuge in flight; the spirit of renunciation which lies at the root of true asceticism being only too much in harmony with the passive, desponding temper of the Indian mind.

The yogis, however, must not be confounded with other ascetics. They form a distinct order, hold peculiar doctrines, and go through, or pretend to go through, a prescribed course of discipline for the attainment of certain objects which they have in view.

The *yoga-vidya* is one of the six recognized orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy, and the text-book

* Dr. George Smith's "Life of Dr. Wilson," p. 74

of the yogis is an old Sanskrit work, the "yoga-Satya" of Patanjali,¹ which teaches that by contemplation, posturing, the suspension of the breath, and other practices, the ascetic can disengage his soul from its gross earthly connections and then be able to attain a full knowledge of the past and of the future, of the condition of this and of other worlds, and of the very thoughts of his fellow-men. Not only far-reaching knowledge, but power over man and nature of the most extraordinary and unlimited kind, is promised to the successful yogi.

It is certainly not, at the present day, easy for the Western mind to enter into the spirit of the so-called *yoga philosophy*; but the student of religious opinions is aware that in the early centuries of our era the Gnostics, Manichæans, and Neoplatonists, derived their peculiar tenets and practices from the *yoga-vidya* of India, and that, at a later date, the *Sufi* philosophy of Persia drew its most remarkable ideas from the same source.²

¹ This work has been translated into English by Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra.

² Professor Weber's "*Indian Literature*" (English translation), page 239.

"The principal points of contact, however, between Indian philosophy and Gnosticism may be regarded as common to both branches of the former. These are (1) the doctrine of the emanation of the world from the one absolute existence and of its final reabsorption into that existence; (2) the doctrine of the inherent evil, and at the same time of the unreality of matter; (3) the doctrine of the antagonism between spirit and matter, and the practical consequence, that the highest aim of religion is to free the soul from the contamination of matter and to raise it to a final absorption in the being of the absolute."—"Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries," by Dean Mansel, pp 29, 30.

The great historian of the Roman Empire refers to the subject in the following passage :

"The fakirs of India and the monks of the Oriental Church, were alike persuaded, that in total abstraction of the faculties of the mind and body, the purer spirit may ascend to the enjoyment and vision of the Deity. The opinion and practice of the monasteries of Mount Athos will be best represented in the words of an abbot, who flourished in the eleventh century. 'When thou art alone in thy cell,' says the ascetic teacher, 'shut thy door, and seat thyself in a corner ; raise thy mind above all things vain and transitory ; recline thy beard and chin on thy breast ; turn thy eyes and thy thoughts towards the middle of thy belly, the region of the navel ; and search the place of the heart, the seat of the soul. At first, all will be dark and comfortless ; but if you persevere day and night, you will feel an ineffable joy ; and no sooner has the soul discovered the place of the heart, than it is involved in a mystic and ethereal light.' This light, the production of a distempered fancy, the creature of an empty stomach and an empty brain, was adored by the Quietists as the pure and perfect essence of God himself."

A system like that of the yogis, which has lasted so many centuries, which is still believed in, and which influenced the ideas and practices of ascetics in far distant lands, can hardly be undeserving of attention.

Without entering into unnecessary details—many of them are simply disgusting—I shall quote, as samples, a few of the rules of practice required to be followed by the would-be yogi in order to induce a state of *samadhi*—hypnotism or trance—which is the condition or state in which the yogi is to enjoy the promised privileges of yoga. The extracts are

* Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. lvi.

from a treatise on the yoga philosophy by Assistant-Surgeon Nobin Chander Paul.*

"Place the left foot upon the right thigh and the right foot upon the left thigh ; hold with the right hand the right great toe and with the left hand the left great toe (the hands coming from behind the back and crossing each other) ; rest the chin on the interclavicular space and fix the sight on the tip of the nose.

* * * * *

"Inspire through the left nostril, fill the stomach with the inspired air by the act of deglutition, suspend the breath, and then expire through the right nostril. Next inspire through the right nostril, swallow the inspired air, suspend the breath, and finally expire through the left nostril.

* * * * *

"Be seated in a tranquil posture, and fix your sight on the tip of the nose for the space of ten minutes.

"Close the ears with the middle fingers, incline the head a little to the right side and listen with each ear attentively to the sound produced by the other ear, for the space of ten minutes.

"Pronounce inaudibly twelve thousand times the mystic syllable *Om*, and meditate upon it daily after deep inspirations

"After a few forcible inspirations swallow the tongue, and thereby suspend the breath, and deglutate the saliva for two hours.

"Listen to the sounds within the right ear abstractedly for two hours, with the left ear.

* * * * *

"Repeat the mystic syllable *Om* 20,736,000 times in silence and meditate upon it.

"Suspend the respiratory movements for the period of twelve days, and you will be in a state of *Samadhi*."

Such are a few of the rules of discipline prescribed by the *Hatha yog* system ; and although the reader

rajah Runjeet Singh, of the Punjab, and his court, was carefully buried in a garden outside the city of Lahore. For forty days strict watch was kept over the grave, and, at the expiration of that time, the yogi was exhumed, cold, stiff, and unconscious; but was gradually restored to animation by applying warmth to the head and friction to the body, while forcing air gently into the lungs. Granting the truth of the story, and the absence of any collusion or trickery, the only legitimate inference from the facts is, of course, that Haridas, in the practice of *yoga-vidya*, or otherwise, had acquired the art of suspending animation for a considerable period; an art not without interest from a physiological point of view, but one the acquisition of which, Europeans are never likely to care for. As regards Haridas himself, it is said that he was a man of loose morals, against whom several complaints were made to Runjeet Singh; that he eloped with a Katrany woman, made his way to the hills, died there, and was duly buried according to the custom of the country.¹

Referring to the case of Haridas, the writer, (W. F. K.) of the article "Hybernation" in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* says:

"Long continued suspension of consciousness in man, whether voluntary or otherwise, is rare in temperate climates, but it is more frequent in India, where some religious ascetics are stated, on unimpeachable authority, to possess the power of throwing themselves into a state closely resembling hybernation for an indefinite period. Many curious cases have been

¹ See "Thirty-five Years in the East," by Dr. Hongnberger, Physician to the Court of Lahore, pp. 126, 130. London, 1852.

recorded by Mr. Braid in his small treatise on 'Human Hybernation' published in 1850, the most celebrated of which is that of a fakir who was actually buried alive at Lahore in 1837 in the presence of Runjeet Singh and Sir Claude Wade, and who was dug up and restored to consciousness several months' afterwards, after every precaution had been taken to prevent any from disturbing the grave in the interval."

Besides the *Hatha yog* system, which I have briefly described above, there is another one, the *Raj yog*, according to which *samadhi* may be attained without severe bodily discipline, by the mere force of self-control and meditation, possibly combined with fixation of attention on some object (e.g. the nose) near enough to cause squinting. Whether this system owes its origin to the extreme difficulty, not to say impracticability, of acting up to the rules of the *Hatha yog* system, or whether, as I have been assured, it is older than that system, I do not pretend to say. But I should state here that some who claim to be authorities on the subject maintain that one could not attain *samadhi* through the *Raj yog* alone, unless, indeed, one had gone through the terrible discipline of the *Hatha yog* in a previous existence.²

The *Raj yog* philosophy, as expounded in English by the Madras yogi Sabhapaty Swami, with whom I had the pleasure of conversing on one occasion, teaches that man's existence, as distinct and separate from the Infinite Universal Spirit, is a mere delusion, which arises from the genesis of the so-called twelve faculties, due to the circulation of the Universal

¹ Dr. Honigberger, who was at Runjeet Singh's court at the time, says *forty days*—J. C. O.

² Swami Dyanand Saraswati in "*Theosophist*," vol. ii. p. 47.

Spirit through the human body, in a triple set of hollow vessels, answering in some way to animal functions, mind, and soul—reminding one of Lytton's impressive description of the red, the azure, and the silvery light circulating through Margrave's prostrate frame in the museum under the power of Sir Philip Derval's spells. The position and course of these vessels is indicated in a fantastic diagram in the Madras yogi's pamphlet. In its passage through them the Infinite Spirit evolves, at different points, the several faculties, senses, and desires of men; but these, being entirely gross and delusive, must be subdued and annihilated, if the soul in man is to gain its lost omniscience and serenity. For the attainment of this object the Madras yogi—himself a professed adept who had been privileged to fly through the air to Kailas, the celestial mountain, and there to behold the Great God Siva employed in yoga practices—lays down detailed rules, having for their aim and object a gradual extinction of all the human faculties, senses, and desires, by means of arguments addressed to them separately; by a course of long continued meditation with closed eyes in a secluded place; by drawing the spirit up and down through the triple channel of the *sikmana* (or *Sashumna*) *nadce*, and by the uttering of certain spells or mantras.

Addressing the neophyte, the Madras yogi observes :

"Remember . . . that you must be very cautious that the twelve faculties dead and buried should not give forth the bad effluvia of their putrefication and annoy and disturb you at the time of your *samadhi*. I again warn you and say beware of those

treacherous faculties, and become not again their servile, crouching, mean and ignoble slave and victim.

"If in this state you have any consciousness of seeing the Infinite Spirit, cancel that consciousness also. For who is it that sees, and what is that that is seen? In fact empty yourself from the consciousness of wisdom and duality; *you must become the Infinite Spirit without the idea of becoming the Infinite Spirit.*"

Thus by the practice of Raj yoga and the attainment of samadhi the devotee becomes unconcious of his existence as a man, and passes, as it were into the full consciousness of divinity with all its attributes. But what becomes of the body? On this point the Madras yogi says that the rishis and yogis, after remaining, as long as they like, in the condition of absorption in the Infinite, metamorphose their bodies into lingams,¹ many of which may be seen in the *ashrams*, and then enter into final reunion with the Universal Spirit. The Madras yogi goes on to say that many ancient *rishis*, stated to have died thousands of years ago, are still living, and are visited periodically by the yogis on the Neilgherry Hills.² So congenial are marvels to the genius of the East, that possibly when Mr. Ryder Haggard's powerful story, "She," finds its way into the hands of Indian believers in *yoga-vidya*, they will pretend that the yogis had long since discovered the wonderful fire which is the Spirit of the World, the very life of Nature, and, bathing in its life-

¹ The phallic emblem worshipped by the followers of the god Siva.

² A treatise on "Vedantic Raj Yoga Philosophy" by the Mahatma Giana Guroo Yogi Sabhapati Swami. Edited by Siris Chandra Basu. Lahore, 1880.

giving flames, had secured themselves against physical decay and death.

In one form or other the idea which underlies the doctrine of yoga has a profound and abiding influence on the religious life of the entire Hindu race, and a fascination even for minds which have emancipated themselves, to a large degree, from hereditary and traditional influences. *Yōga* in its spiritual aspect, and in an Occidental disguise, is well presented by the late Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, "the Apostle of the New Dispensation" and leader of the Brahmo sect, in the following interesting passage :

"What does yoga literally mean? Union. The English word which makes the nearest approach to it is Communion. The created soul, in its worldly and sinful condition, lives separate and estranged from the Supreme Soul. A reconciliation is needed; nay, more than mere reconciliation. A harmonious union is sought and realized. This union with Deity is the real secret of Hindu yoga. It is a spiritual unification, it is consciousness of two in one; duality in unity. To the philosophical and thoughtful Hindu this is the highest heaven. He pants for no other salvation; he seeks no other *mukti* or deliverance. Separation, disunion, estrangement, a sense of distinction, duality, the pride of the eye, this is to him the root of all sin and suffering; and the only heaven he aspires to is conscious union and oneness with Deity. He is ever struggling and striving to attain this blessed condition of divine humanity. Once in possession of it, he is above all sorrow and distraction, sin and impurity, and he feels all is serene and tranquil within. All his devotions and prayers, his rites and ceremonies, his meditations and his self-denials, are but means and methods which help him on to this heaven."

* "Yoga; Objective and Subjective." Calcutta The Brahmo Tract Society, 1884

It will be evident, after what has already been stated in this paper, that this yogaism of the *Brahmo* is not quite that of the orthodox *Hindu*, but, like Dr. Jenkinson's Christianity in Mr. Mallock's "New Republic," is "really a new firm trading under an old name and trying to purchase the goodwill of the former establishment."

During the last few years the *yoga-vidya* system has attracted an unusual amount of attention amongst the educated classes in India, owing to the fact that a Yankee colonel and a clever Russian lady went about the country openly professing their belief in the existence of yogi adepts and their extraordinary powers. The gallant colonel told a large audience of natives, in the most emphatic manner, that there were at the present time Indian adepts in Yog-Vidya who could carry on conversation with one another, at any distance, without the cumbrous appliances ("poles, wires, and pots of chemicals") of the European electric telegraph; omitting, however, to add that the wonderful occult telegraph system of the yogi—independent of poles, wires, and pots of chemicals—has not been of much use to the people of India and that the vast knowledge of the secrets of nature possessed by these sages, has not helped their compatriots to make life one whit more pleasant or endurable. As for the Russian lady, she took higher ground: for, although not an adept herself, she enjoyed the privilege of the friendship and countenance of one of the great yogis or *mahatmas* of the Himalayas, Koot Hoomi Lal Singh, whose mighty aid enabled her, it seems, to accomplish a few feats such as

ordinary conjurors perform every day without the help of such highly endowed patrons.

Certain classes of the natives of India naturally hailed, with joy and pride, the advent of these new allies from the advanced and civilized countries beyond the sea; allies who were never tired of flattering their national vanity, by telling them that their own yogi adepts, dwelling in remote parts of the Himalayas, had satisfactorily solved problems towards which European science was only just feebly groping its way. That many Hindus should, under the circumstances, become ardent followers of these new apostles from the West, was only natural. But it has to be added that the clever lady and her colleague actually found believers and followers amongst the highest and best educated class of Europeans in India. Possibly a strong tincture of the prevailing scepticism with regard to all ancient beliefs, combined with a leaning towards the new Comtean religion of humanity, may have led these gentlemen to give a favourable reception to the idea of the existence of human-gods in the inaccessible mountains. But whether this surmise be correct or not, it is certain that several Europeans of good social position joined the Theosophical Society, and became humble disciples of Madame Blavatsky and the invisible but potent Koot Hoomi Lal Singh. One convert to the new religion wrote a very readable book on the occult world, in which he unfalteringly believed. Others gave what countenance and support they could to the new movement. A shrine of Koot Hoomi, with a lock and key, was set up, and many remarkable, if meaningless, phenomena

took place there ; for instance, fragments of a broken saucer were introduced into the shrine and the door locked. On opening it, a whole saucer was found inside. We are of course to believe that the whole saucer was made in some wonderful way by the presiding divinity out of the broken pieces put into the cabinet—though the sceptical have been wicked enough to suggest the existence of sliding backs and such-like things.

In April 1883, I had the pleasure of listening to, and exchanging a few words with, one who professed to be an advanced *Chela*, or disciple, of the mahatmas of the Himalayas and Thibet, that dark borderland of mystery to the Indians of our days, as it was to their forefathers ; who believed that on Mount Meru lived the Uttara Kurus, who reached the age of ten thousand years on the banks of streams flowing in golden beds. His advent was thus publicly announced :

"An advanced Chela (on his way from the North) has condescended to attend the meeting, and to show certain test phenomena, in order to convince the people as to the reality of occult forces, and will also narrate his personal experiences in *yoga-vidya* as well as give an account of the Mahatmas of the Theosophical Society."

The chela was a very spare, diminutive, dark-skinned man, evidently a Dravidian from southern India, although, for obvious reasons, he declined to reveal his nationality. His dress was peculiar. On his head he wore a small skull-cap of orange-yellow cloth with a dark border, below which his long hair could be seen. A loose-sleeved robe of a brown

material reached nearly to his ankles. Over it was a sleeveless vest of a gay pattern. Dark coloured trousers and well-fitting English boots of untanned leather, laced up the front, completed this strange costume.

As for the "Mahatmas of the Theosophical Society," they are adepts in *yoga-vidya*, like the mythical Koot Hoomi Lal Singh, "whose comprehension of Nature and Humanity ranges," according to Mr. A. P. Sinnett, "so far beyond the science and philosophy of Europe, that only the broadest-minded representatives of either will be able to realize the existence of such powers in Man as those he constantly exercises." These are the words of a European, but we shall better understand what the people of India think about such matters by letting the chela enlighten us on the subject.

Addressing his audience in English, he said that when quite a little child, only seven or eight years of age, a yogi appeared before him unexpectedly. A radiance streamed from the person of the holy man, and so surprised and awed him that he fell down and worshipped his visitor, regarding him as a god, "for," added the chela, naively, "in those days I believed in a God, in fact in many gods." The yogi taught the child some signs, which he learned, later on, were *masonic* signs, and then vanished. After this visit the child became thoughtful, gave up the companionship of his young playmates, refused food, and did nothing but long for the reappearance of the wonderful yogi. His

* "The Occult World," by A. P. Sinnett; Dedication. Trubner and Co., 1881.

triumphantly. In this strain was he proceeding, when voices in the audience (all present except myself were natives) suggested that as darkness was closing in upon us, the exhibition of the promised test phenomena should not be delayed. Well, they were at last arrived at, and proved to be simple enough. To establish the truth of *yoga-vidya* and the reality of the hidden forces in which the so-called *occultists* profess belief, the "advanced chela" offered to allow one of his fingers to be cut; asserting that *no blood would flow from it, and that if that member were amputated entirely, it would be miraculously restored.* I examined the particular finger which *was thus ready to bear the heavy burden of occultism.* It was a thin, fleshless, skinny finger, but resembled in these respects, its fellows on the same hand. A ring encircled this finger. An educated and highly respectable native gentleman of good position examined the ring critically, remarking to me that he knew a certain talisman, and wished to see if this was the same, apparently prepared to find the finger fully protected from the knife by the virtue of the charmed circlet. In reply to an inquiry, the chela said he would not object to another finger being experimented upon, provided the ring were transferred to it, thus admitting or declaring the potency of the ring.

Mr. Sinnett, already quoted, writes as follows :

"Ask any cultivated Hindoo if he has ever heard of Mahatmas and *yoga-vidya*, or occult science, and it is a hundred to one that you will find he has—and, unless he happens to be one of the hybrid products of Anglo Indian Universities, that he fully believes in the reality of the powers ascribed to *yoga.*"

This statement I am prepared to endorse. And on the occasion I refer to, there were present many "cultivated Hindoos" of the type approved of by Mr. Sinnett, and also several of the "hybrid products of Anglo-Indian Universities," whose scepticism regarding the truth of *yoga vidya* was apparent in their eagerness to put the chela's pretensions to the test.

In response to the chela's challenge, one young man came forward to cut the finger. Several applauded him; others cried shame! The president vetoed the proceeding, saying, that the amputation or cutting of the finger would be regarded by the law as a case of causing grievous hurt, duly punishable under the penal code. The maintenance of order was now impossible. Everybody pressed forward to see what was going on. An animated dispute was being carried on round the chela. Two of the three kerosine lamps on the table had been extinguished, whether by accident or otherwise I could not tell. The affair had become, literally, a *screaming farce*, and I thought it time to withdraw.

But the matter did not end here. The chela and his supporters were followed to their lodgings. The fulfilment of the proposed test was pressed home, with the result that a young student in the Government College sliced off a portion of the flesh from the end of the chela's finger, followed of course by a copious flow of blood. The facts of the case were stated to me by the man who performed the operation; and the incident may be taken as a fair sample of the *uncompromising struggle just commencing in India*, with more than ordinary warmth, between the

deeply rooted time-honoured superstitions of the East and the modern ideas imported from the West.

In a recent work Professor Max Müller says that the yogi hermits living in the forests of the Himalaya would be the last to claim any mysterious knowledge beyond what the sastras supply.¹ I do not know what authority the learned Professor may have for this statement; but as far as my experience goes, yogicism in the eyes even of men who have had the privilege of instruction in Western science is, without doubt, a system of strange, extraordinary, and mysterious knowledge, giving its possessor very extensive power over men and natural phenomena. Only three or four years ago a graduate of an Indian University thought it worth while to publish a treatise on *yoga-vidya*, embodying such puerilities as the following:—

"In a lonely place let a student of yoga stand with his back towards the sun or moon. Let him fix his eyes on the throat of the shadow he throws and repeat the mantra, *Om Kram para brahmane mansah* for one hundred and eight times, standing in the same position. Let him see into the sky. In this practice let him persevere for six months. He shall see the great light, and obtain powers over those who walk on earth. The subject is a very extensive one. There are many other advantages in this practice. If it is carried on for two years, past as well as future becomes present to the man."²

The passage just cited refers, I believe, to the fact that if you stare intently for some time at your own shadow cast by the bright sunshine and then look up at the sky, you will see your image reproduced there.

¹ "Biographical Essays," p. 177.

² "The Science of Breath," by Pandit Rama Prasad Kasyapa, B.A.

This after-image Indian mystics call the *astral body*, and they declare that it is possible to establish familiar intercourse with it, to induce it to converse freely and to get it to render assistance in the affairs of life. Thus upon a fact well known to scientific men, and easily explainable, the exuberant Oriental imagination has built up an airy fabric of mystery and delusion.

The ethical system of the yogi is simple enough. He has apparently no duties to perform in regard to his fellow-men, though he is required to abstain from slaughter, falsehood, theft, incontinence and avarice.¹ His object in life is to withdraw, as far as possible, from human society, from its business, its troubles, its aspirations, and, in silent solitude, to deliberately annihilate every faculty and attribute of his manhood. The world of humanity may go its way while the yogi is lost in the Universal Spirit. With a strange want of appreciation of the legitimate powers and functions of the healthy human mind, without even a glimmering of the beauty and interest of the infinitely varied phenomena which science has brought within its ken, the yogi shuts his eyes to the sensible world around him, and expects universal knowledge from idle self-contemplation.

The root idea of the yoga philosophy and practice must be looked for in that pantheism which has ever been the esoteric creed of Brahmanic India and of Asia generally. Since man is really and essentially a part of the Universal Deity (the all-God), consisting of both spiritual and material elements, it is surely possible, argued the Brahman, for the in-

¹ "Hindu Philosophy," by Ram Chandra Bose, M.A., p. 175.

telligent part of him to attain to a consciousness of its oneness with Deity, or rather the Universal Spirit, and in doing so to become possessed of all the attributes of godhood. The real difficulty in the way was the body, with its senses, its appetites, and its passions. If these could be subdued the desired object would be secured.¹ In a state of trance the bodily functions become suspended, and hence it seemed to the Brahman that the attainment of this condition should be the aim of any one who desired to be reunited with the Universal Spirit. And as already remarked, the practices enjoined by the rules of the *yoga-vidya* would seem to be such as the experience of the Hindus had found to be most conducive to the production of a state of hypnotism. Thus far we can follow the yogi. Beyond this comes dream-land, mental hallucination and deliberate imposture.

Although there are, and must at all times have been, honest yogis, yet the calling has, undoubtedly, its attractions for impostors. The disappointed man, disgusted with life, and willing to renounce it, turns for consolation to a system which promises complete release from the illusions of human hopes and the penalties of human infirmities. The ambitious enthusiast enters upon its practices to acquire the power he expects to attain by the proper observance of the prescribed conditions; whereas the knave, on his part, takes up the calling without any serious intention of abiding by the rules, but with the very

¹ The reader of Plato will not need to be reminded how Socrates taught that the body, with its eyes and ears and other organs of sense, was only a hindrance to the soul in the acquisition of the knowledge of existence ("Phædo").

sufficient object of imposing upon the credulous multitude, under the influence of the vague, indefinable terror inspired by the superhuman power he arrogantly lays claim to, and which the vulgar are only too ready to attribute to him.

Of the fact that some men who practise yog at the present day do honestly believe they acquire extraordinary power thereby, we had a curious instance at Lahore. A yogi, who believed himself possessed of a commanding influence over wild animals, in order to put his powers to the test, attempted some familiarities with the tiger in the Lahore Zoological Gardens, and got himself so mauled that his arm had to be amputated.

Cases of deliberate imposture are numerous, and sometimes come before our law courts.

Some years ago the following story went the round of the Anglo-Indian newspapers:—A yogi predicted that on a certain important occasion an idol would emerge from the ground at Bithooria in Jodhpore. In due time an idol rose gradually above the surface of the earth, and immediately became an object of worship to tens of thousands, who flocked to lay their offerings before the god who had thus miraculously made his appearance in the world. The place was taken under the Maharajah's protection, and yielded a considerable revenue, though probably only for a brief period, as the idol retreated into the earth, as slowly and mysteriously as it had come forth. The explanation of the mystery was that the prophet had dug a deep but narrow pit, and filled it, almost to the brim, with *gram*. On this foundation he placed the idol and covered it up. He then

allowed a sufficient supply of water to reach the gram, which in swelling in the narrow pit raised the idol above the ground. When, subsequently, the gram was allowed to dry or rot the idol subsided with it, and was lost to the anxious gaze of its worshippers.

A philosophy of quietism is natural to the indolence and enervation of an Indian life. While European writers are never tired of insisting that *action* is the object of man's existence, or as Carlyle put it—"the end of Man is an Action and not a Thought, though it were the noblest"—the Hindu philosopher deprecates action, believing rather in quiet contemplation. Hence yogaism flourishes and has flourished for ages in India, and the question naturally presents itself: What has been the practical outcome of the system? The question, may not be easy to answer, but this much at least may be said without hesitation, that the best minds have been withdrawn, through yogaism, from the pursuit of practical objects, and drowned in a dull lethargic sleep, unprofitable alike to themselves and their country; while upon the masses, unacquainted with the subtle doctrines of pantheism and so-called yoga philosophy, the effect of having before them the lazy, dirty, repulsive yogi as an ideal of excellence and a pattern for imitation, cannot have been otherwise than injurious. How long the unwashed, unkempt ascetic, who, disregarding every duty and obligation to family or society, sits absorbed in the contemplation of the tip of his own nose, or wanders about the country living upon the credulity and fears of the ignorant, shall remain an object of veneration to the people, must depend upon the many and

various influences now at work in modifying the ideas and character of the natives of India. Of course it is the *heroic*, and not the obviously repulsive, side of asceticism which, in the case of the yogi or any other anchorite, commands, in the first instance, the admiration of the people. The ascetic's self-denial, his contempt of the world and worldly pleasures, his self-inflicted penances and mortifications, are indications of will-force, determination, tenacity of purpose and self-sufficiency, which attract and overawe the multitude. The ascetic, by his scornful renunciation of all they hold most valuable, asserts his superiority to and commands the homage of the vulgar, which in the case of the yogi is enhanced by dread of his supposed power. After making allowances, however, for whatever of good there may be in yogaism and in the yogis themselves, it will be admitted, at any rate by Europeans, that until these useless, selfish, and uncouth idols are dethroned, the Indian mind will not rise to a just appreciation of real (as distinguished from ceremonial) cleanliness, manly energy, and public spirit.

Happily there are already signs which indicate that even such educated natives as cannot emancipate themselves from a belief in *yoga-vidya*—national beliefs die hard—are beginning to be ashamed of the dirty, indolent, and repulsive mendicants who perambulate the country, and, for the credit of the so-called yog science, pretend that the *real* yogis are very different from these unclean and disgusting objects of popular veneration.

With the spread of Western ideas, and with the growth of new objects of ambition created by inti-

mate contact with the restless civilization and free institutions of Europe, the yogi and his system will necessarily occupy a diminishing place in the thoughts and in the hearts of the people of India ; but so thoroughly suited is *yoga-vidya* to the genius of the East, that probably many generations will pass away before it is numbered with the extinct systems of a vanished state of society.

II.

EXPERIENCES WITH FORTUNE-TELLERS.

"You cannot doubt the seer's prophetic sight ;
Trust me, what he hath said will surely be.
Whatever is uttered by the holy Brahman,
Who is the light divine and manifest,
Must come to pass."

Uttara-Râma-Charitra (Professor H. H.
WILSON'S Translation).

A WELL-DRESSED man, with a big wallet under his arm and a pamphlet in his hand, presented himself before me as I sat in my verandah, announcing his presence in these words, "*Fortune tailer, sar!*" which I believe represented his entire stock of what was meant for English. He was of middle stature, of that clean yellow-brown complexion (which has been compared to the colour of a new saddle) common amongst natives of the better sort in India. His features were well-cut, his eyes sharp and intelligent. A white line was neatly painted down the length of his nose, and two other white lines ran along the outer margins of his ears. He wore gold earrings set with pearls, and from his neck hung two strings

of beads, the shorter one consisting of alternate pieces of gold and red coral, the longer one of neatly shaped bits of sweet-scented sandal-wood. There was nothing of the gipsy about this man. Quite the reverse; he looked a person in easy circumstances, enjoying comfortable relations with his neighbours and the world in general.

I asked to see the pamphlet he carried. He handed it to me very readily. It was an astrological almanac for the year, and, after a little chaffering, he sold it to me for six annas, which I afterwards learned was just six times its market value. After buying the pamphlet I told the fortune-teller to go away, but he was by far too experienced in his trade to be got rid of so easily, and immediately had recourse to the *old trick* so familiar to professors of his art. Without examining my hand he could tell, from the indications given by my face alone, that the fate in store for me was a very good one; but he protested that the pleasant details of the future could only be read in the lines of the open palm. "Just show me your hand," he said, "and I will reveal to you all the secrets of the future. Yours is a good fate." I still refused. He next tried flattery. Looking straight into my eyes, as if to read me through and through, he affirmed, with much impressiveness, that I was a man of strict probity and one who never broke his word; and this, for reasons which became apparent in the sequel, he reiterated several times. In regard to my past life he hazarded some vague guesses, which in a few cases were fairly correct and in others very wide of the truth. Having prolonged these preliminaries sufficiently for

my purpose, which was to draw the fortune-teller out, I resigned my palm to him. After scanning it attentively, he began predicting with much volubility the length of the years, eighty-four, allotted to me; the number of children, thirteen, I was to be father to, and so on. Suddenly he paused in the midst of his vaticinations, as if in some perplexity, and then announced, with every mark of deep and natural concern, that an enemy was endeavouring to cause serious injury to me and mine. "The enemy," he said, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, with a far-off look in his eyes, as if peering into the mystery, "was probably a disappointed servant;" but when pressed on this point, the astrologer admitted that he could not make any positive assertion on the subject. But whoever he might be, the enemy in question had, after the manner of the practisers of the black art in all countries, made tiny images (*pullas*) to represent me and the members of my family, and, invoking a terrible curse upon these *simulacra*, had consumed them with fire.¹ With an appearance of earnestness which would certainly have had considerable effect upon any credulous

¹ "There are districts in Great Britain and America, and many more on the continent of Europe, where spells that waste and destroy are still believed in; where effigies of wax and even onions are labelled with some hated name, and stuck over with pins, and set near fires to be melted or dried up, in full belief that some subject of the charm will be consumed by disease along with the object used."—Conway's "Demonology," vol. i. p. 272.

The same custom was known to Plato and is practised by negroes (Lang's "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," i. 95). As every reader of modern English poetry knows, the superstition

person, the Brahman revealed to me that the danger hanging over me and mine was death to at least three members of my household, and a long and dangerous illness in my own case. He very prudently did not threaten me with an untimely end, having already announced that I was to live to the advanced age of eighty-four years. Although I tried to betray no signs of incredulity, the Brahman seemed to think that my faith in his knowledge or veracity needed strengthening. "Doubt me not," he said, with uplifted hands and eyes turned heavenwards; "I am a Brahman, and God will strike me blind if I am telling you any untruth. May my strength forsake me, may my very life be the sacrifice, if what I am asserting be false." "Sit down here," he added, "and I will make this matter clear to you. I will put it beyond all doubt." He asked for a flower and a basin of water. A rose and a bowl of water were brought. The Brahman made me wash my hands and arms carefully to a little above the wrists, and repeating strange incantations (Sanskrit, *mantras*), he made me close my right hand over the rose and dip both hands, tightly closed, into the vessel of water. I had no idea of what was going

in question is woven into Dante Gabriel Rossetti's impressive little poem "Sister Helen," the first stanza of which is :

"Why did you melt your waxen man,
Sister Helen?

To-day is the third since you began!
The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother.

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)"

to follow, but willing to see and learn, I passively obeyed all the directions of the fortune-teller. After awhile he ceased his muttered spells, requested me to take my hands out of the water, and turning up the right sleeve of my coat, showed me—to my surprise, I must confess—a dark mark upon my bare skin just above the wrist, resembling a rudely designed figure with a round head, an oval trunk, arms expanded widely, and legs far apart. Pointing to the mark, the seer said, with bated breath, “The effigies made by your enemy were like that! Do you believe me now? How terrible is the danger that menaces you; but, happily, I can assist you to ward it off.”

A metal plate or salver, a little salt, and an iron nail were required at this stage, and were produced. Three pinches of the salt¹ were cast upon the dark portentous mark which still disfigured my arm, and then the Brahman gradually washed it out by rubbing it with the iron nail repeatedly dipped in the water. He next placed the rose on the salver, and after passing it round my head a particular number of times, he made me pour three and a half handfuls of water upon it. From his wallet he produced a bit of old flat iron about three inches long and three-fourths of an inch wide. This he placed in the salver. Still muttering spells and invoking gods and saints (the names of Jesus and Muhammad being strangely blended with the names of the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon), he asked for

¹ That demons hate or dread salt is an old and widespread superstition. See Conway's “*Demonology and Devil lore*,” II. p. 227.

some clothes which had been worn by me. The required articles, having been produced, were placed by him under my feet. Next the inevitable piece of silver was required, and when handed to him was deposited in the salver. I was requested to step over it and back again three times. Now followed more mutterings of spells. The salver was made to rest on both my hands, and the Brahman bid me fix my attention upon the piece of iron lying on it in the water. Speaking after my friend, as I may now call him, I transferred to the lifeless bit of old iron in the tray the curses which had been heaped upon me and mine by our unknown, but not less dangerous foe. While the Brahman muttered his mantras for my preservation, I waited with no very lively curiosity to see what the next proceeding would be. Suddenly I was startled by the scrap of inanimate iron making a lively jump quite out of the salver which was resting on my hands. It fell upon the Brahman's thigh as he sat squat upon the carpet. With well-feigned excitement he interpreted this incident as establishing satisfactorily that the rite we had performed had had the desired effect. The spell cast upon me and mine had been broken.

I thought the business was over, as the Brahman said that the impending evil having been averted by his counter spells, my good fortune would now be very great. Rising above vague generalities, he ventured upon the specific prediction that within three weeks I should receive information of the most gratifying kind, adding that when the happy event occurred he would come to me in person and claim a reward of five rupees. Indeed he was even

more explicit in his prediction. A sum of money due to me, the payment of which had been delayed on account of some misunderstanding, would soon be received by me, and I would, probably, before long, leave Lahore for a better appointment elsewhere.

The affair, however, was not quite over yet. It was undoubtedly true that the children and myself were now out of danger, but a special peril still threatened the *Mum Sahib* (the lady). Having averted the danger from myself, surely I would not leave the lady in trouble. Was I sceptical about the risk to which she was still exposed? My doubts could easily be set at rest.

This time a small lump of cotton, dipped in common olive oil, was required and duly provided. Talking volubly, with great apparent earnestness and many confidential whispers, the fortune-teller made us hold the cotton between our hands, placed one upon the other, palm to palm, and after sundry muttered spells he lifted up the cotton and squeezed the oil from it, quite of a blood-red colour. Of course this was only a token of an impending calamity of some sort, to avert which a piece of clean cotton cloth and some silver were needed. The indispensable articles were brought, and after the appropriate mantras had been uttered, became, I need hardly say, the property of the clever fortune-teller.

The business was at last over; the Brahman had only to write out two pieces of paper with cabalistic signs, one in the name of my wife and the other in my name. Whilst so employed a little son

of mine was standing by with a new inkstand in his hand, one of those ordinary traveller's inkstands shaped like a box, with a spring lid. The Brahman wished to see it, took it in his hand, opened it, observed that there was no ink in it, and quietly placed it just before him on the carpet. He slowly completed his cabalistic papers. One was to be thrown into water the next day, together with some *goor* (crude sugar) and a flower; the other to be wrapped up in a piece of red cloth, with a clove and a cardamum, and laid under my pillow, until the fulfilment of his prediction that I should receive, within three weeks, good news of a very acceptable kind.

Affirming for the twentieth time the implicit trust that could be placed upon my every word, he now put the empty inkstand into one of my hands and some old clothes in the other, and getting me to repeat certain words after him, the artful Brahman led me, quite easily and without my perceiving exactly what he was about, to make him a formal present of the inkstand, which I really had had no intention of doing.

I now took up and examined the piece of iron which had indicated, in such a lively and demonstrative manner, its willingness to stand vicariously for us. It was a little bit of ordinary flat iron, doubled over at one end to the extent of about one-sixth of an inch. Wedged, but not tightly, in the fold I found a small white bead, which the Brahman quickly removed when his attention was drawn to it, assuring me that it was only a common bead which must have got in there by accident when the iron

was lying, with a lot of other things, in his bag. But the little intruder, I think, betrayed a secret, for, in all probability, by means of it and the help of a long fine hair, the bit of iron had been persuaded into energetic acceptance of the danger threatening us. As to the figure that had appeared upon my arm, it had, of course, been impressed upon my damp skin as the soothsayer was pretending to show me the exact position in which I should hold my hands in the water.

Our friend was packing up now. From the ready way in which we had carried out his instructions, he must—and naturally enough—have concluded that he had credulous dupes to deal with, and so made a last attempt to derive profit either from my superstitious fears or my unwariness. Pointing to the bit of iron which I had replaced in the salver, he requested me to tell him to take that away, together with the dangers which had been threatening us. Too wide-awake this time to be taken in, I lifted the iron out of the salver, and, handing the rusty scrap of metal to him, told him to take it away. This ended the proceedings.

And now for the fulfilment of the prediction of speedy good news. Well, no good news of any kind reached me; but—such is the irony of fate—on the very last day of the three weeks within which I was to receive glad tidings, a letter was handed to me containing the most disappointing piece of intelligence affecting my own prospects which could well have been imagined. In this way were the truthful Brahman's predictions fulfilled. Let him look to it in the next world. For, if we

may trust Dante, our Brahman seer, and men of his kind, having presumed to look too far ahead, will for ever wander backwards about the dismal pit with their heads turned round and set the contrary way on their shoulders—and they will richly deserve their punishment.

I cannot hope to have given my reader an adequate idea of the art and power of the crafty Brahman. His earnest and continued appeals to God, his constant and solemn invocations of curses upon his own head if he were departing from the truth, were really very impressive, even to me who had no reason to place the smallest confidence in him. I can well understand how, under ordinary circumstances, such a man could play upon the credulity and fears of the ignorant and superstitious Hindus; how weak, impulsive women would be ready dupes of his clever appeals to their hopes and fears, how he would excite their curiosity, how his sleight of hand would impose upon them, and how the respect and awe inspired by his sacred character as a Brahman would complete the delusion of his victims.

On another occasion I allowed a Brahman fortune-teller to practise his art at my expense. His method of proceeding was somewhat different from that already described. He did not commit himself to any reckless statements in regard to my past life, nor did he venture any very definite predictions about my future. He confined himself to saying that I had a certain object in view, the accomplishment of which I earnestly desired, and that he could easily satisfy me whether I should gain my end or not.

After examining my hand, and getting my palm crossed with silver, he made me procure a piece of thread, break it myself into five bits, roll the fragments up together and drop them, hap-hazard, on a strip of cloth covered with various cabalistic signs and figures. The process of dropping the thread on the mystic cloth was repeated several times, the Brahman pretending to take special note of the particular signs upon which the ball of thread fell on each occasion. Once, however, he asked me to separate and count the pieces of thread, in order, as he said, that there might be no mistake about the matter. I did so. At length he handed me the pellet of thread, requesting me to place it in my mouth. *I had next to wash my hands and cross them on my breast, solemnly fixing my thoughts on God, and calling to mind any wish I might have specially at heart. I was also to blow five times on the back of my hands as they lay crossed on my breast. While I remained in this position, the Brahman kept repeating various mantras in Sanskrit. He assured me that if a mark appeared on the palm of my left hand, my wish would be fulfilled after the lapse of a considerable time ; but that if a mark appeared on the palm of my right hand, I might calculate upon the speedy accomplishment of my hopes. I removed my hands, the left one first. There was no mark on it. But the right hand bore a conspicuous one on the centre of the palm, seeing which the Brahman said that all would be well with me. He then got some more money, which had to be passed over and round my head three times, with the prayer that all my misfortunes might pass away.

At this stage the fortune-teller requested me to remove the pellet of thread from my mouth, saying that if the pieces had joined together, then every possible doubt in regard to the fulfilment of my wishes would be removed. I took the thread out of my mouth, and, sure enough, there was but one long piece instead of five little ones. The Brahman now put some salt in my hand, upon the dark mark, and with the rupees and salt rubbed it out, as well as he could, and eventually obliterated it completely, with the aid of five roses, which had been brought for the purpose from my garden. Finally, as a parting admonition, the seer warned me to be very circumspect in what I said; always to keep my own counsel, and not even to relate my dreams to any one. Desiring every soul to quit the room, he whispered into my ear a secret recipe for the preparation of a sweetmeat—of which I dare not particularize the ingredients—which would possess the strange property of winning for me the sympathy and affection of any person who might partake of it. Seeing my evident surprise at the nature of his prescription, the Brahman told me that I might please myself about making use of the knowledge he had imparted to me, but that I need not fear to act upon his recommendation, for the sin (*goonah*), if any, would be on his head, not mine. Throughout the proceedings the Brahman swore by his sacred thread and by his son, who had accompanied him and was waiting in the verandah outside.

The reader will probably expect me to give an explanation, should I have one to offer, regarding the appearance of the black mark on my hand and the

joining up of the five pieces of thread in my mouth. I must confess that, although I was as vigilant as possible, the clever dexterity of the Brahman eluded my suspicious watchfulness over his proceedings, so that I am not in a position to say how his tricks were actually accomplished, though possible explanations have occurred to me. One always fancies that one can unmask the clever juggler, but generally the wish to show him up is stronger than the ability to do so.

It will be evident from the foregoing narrative what a clever, worldly-wise fellow the Indian fortune-teller is. He travels much—I have met the same man at Agra and at Lahore—and he skilfully adapts himself to every age and to all circumstances of life. I remember a Brahman telling me my fortune at Calcutta when I was quite a youth. At that impressionable time of life, what more appropriate road to the purse than the tender passion? So the crafty Brahman solemnly assured me that a married friend of mine, young and good looking, was madly in love with me, and offered me his assistance to bring us together.

Brahman fortune-tellers are the astrologers who play so important a part in the every-day life of the Hindu.

They are consulted, especially by the women, before taking nearly every important or trivial step in life. Is a throne to be ascended? Is a battle to be fought? The astrologer must name the proper time. Is a marriage to be arranged? The astrologer must

* Elliot's "Muhammadan Historians of India," by Prof. Dawson, vol. v. p. 77. "Voyages de François Bernier," tome i. pp. 213-216. Amsterdam, 1699

give his approval and must fix the auspicious day. Is a journey to be undertaken? The astrologer must appoint the day upon which to set off. Has the weather become so hot that people wish to leave their rooms and transfer their beds to the flat terraced roofs of their houses? The astrologer must tell them when this important migration should be carried out. Is the love of a man or a woman desired? The astrologer is again appealed to for charms and spells and love-potions.

Pausing one day, just for a minute, by the Bohar gate, near the little bridge over the canal which forms the favourite bathing-place of the people of Multan, a picturesque and interesting scene presented itself to my view. On one side of the bridge the men and on the other the women, very much undraped, were enjoying their morning bath. On the steps leading from the water I noticed a woman in clean new garments whose graceful form attracted my attention. Ascending the flight of steps, she passed through the precincts of the temple of Siva and deposited a small offering before the *lingam*. An hour afterwards I was at the ancient temple of Prahladpuri, and observed, through the wide open door, the same woman, in close consultation with a Brahman in an adjoining building. The priest was unfolding before her a long roll of astrological paper, and with a look of great apparent sincerity seemed helping her to unveil the secrets of the future. Of what he said or what she wished to know, I have, of course, no knowledge; but probably an interesting romance was there being worked out under the cunning hands of the wily Brahmans.

That the Indian fortune-teller can sometimes play a prominent and personal part in the drama of domestic life will appear from the following characteristic story which was related to me by a Muhammadan who knew the parties concerned. A woman whose husband had gone on a journey was very anxious about his prolonged absence from home, as she had received no letter from him since his departure. What more natural than to consult an astrologer? He would surely know what was the matter with the absent man. The reader of secrets was accordingly interviewed very privately. The astrological books were no doubt referred to, and, instructed by the stars, the seer was able to say that at midnight on a certain day of the month her husband would return home; but, for very private and important reasons, would not wish his visit to be known to any one. She was accordingly to keep the matter a *dead secret*, and on no account to awaken the curiosity or suspicions of her neighbours by any preparations or unusual proceedings. The appointed night arrived, and with it a gentle tap on the door and a low voice asking admission. The woman opened the door of her house with eagerness and admitted her silent and muffled visitor, who, affecting to be very tired, found his way to the little *charpoy* and lay down upon it, inviting the woman to join him. It was not long before she discovered, even in the darkness of the little cabin, that her visitor and her husband were very different persons. What was she to do? Had the wretch who occupied the bed come to murder her for her gold and silver ornaments? Should she call out for help? She was alone and at the mercy of

a possibly armed man. Protesting that her lord should not sleep without food after his long journey, she commenced cooking some *poories*, cakes fried in oil. The firelight confirmed her suspicions, and the man in the charpoy, no other than the Brahman astrologer, feeling he was detected, attempted to snatch some ornaments from her person, but she seized the pot and poured the boiling oil over him. His involuntary cries of pain roused the neighbours and led to his apprehension.

Muhammadans also go about pretending to predict fortunes. They use dice in their divinations, and, if I may judge from those with whom I have come in contact, are but shallow fellows in comparison with their Brahman rivals.

"According to an assertion of the Prophet, what a fortune-teller says may be true; because one of the jinn steals away the truth, and carries it to the magician's ear; for the angels come down to the region next the earth (the lowest heaven), and mention the works that have been pre-ordained in heaven; and the devils (or evil jinn) listen to what the angels say, and hear the orders predestined in heaven and carry them to the fortune-tellers. It is on such occasions that shooting stars are hurled at the devils. It is said that 'the diviner obtains the services of the Shейtan (Shaitan) by magic arts, and by names invoked, and by the burning of perfumes, and he informs him of secret things.'"¹

As might be expected, it occasionally happens that the predictions of the astrologers turn out correct. In that case the word is carried from mouth to mouth, and the fame of the fulfilled prophecy travels far and wide; but when events do not tally with the declared anticipations of the prophet, the ignorant are readily persuaded that the nonfulfilment

¹ Hughes' "Dictionary of Islam," art. Magic.

that his death would take place on a certain day in the month of Vaisakh. Thereupon the Bania repaired to the holy shrine of Palitana to perform his funeral rites. But not dying on due date, he returned to Ahmedabad and interviewed the Brahman, who said that he had made a mistake in the calculation, and that Trikamdas would die in the month of Sravan. The devotee has thereupon gone back to Palitana to die ! " *

Could faith or credulity go further ?

India, indeed, is pre-eminently the land of sooth-sayers and fortune-tellers, and has given to Europe the race of gipsies so well known in story and, to a slighter extent, in real life.

* *Tribune*, June 24, 1882.

A STRANGE CULT; THE WORSHIP OF ZÂHIR-PIR.

"The 'Lalbegis once a year erect a long pole covered with flags, coloured cloth, and other things, including cocoa-nuts, in honour of Pir Zahir, or Lal Guru, as he is likewise called; to which they render worship as to a god. 'In this they are like the low Muhammadans, who worship a similarly decorated pole erected to Gazi-Mian, a pir or saint.'—*SURRING'S* "Hindu Tribes and Castes as represented at Benares."

ON the fertile religious soil of India there flourish, in rank luxuriance, many strange forms of worship, one of which forms the subject of this paper.

The quotation at the head of the page alludes, very briefly, to the religious observances I am about to describe; but, like too many such condensed descriptions, it is not quite accurate, for, as far as I have been able to learn, the pole is nowhere *worshipped as a god*.

At Bâgar, in the district of Bikanir, is the tomb of a Pir or saint, well known from the Himalayas to the Narbada, of whom the following marvellous and unmeaning story is told.*

* The legend as I give it in this paper differs in some, though not very essential, points from that contained in *General*

A Rajah of Bâgar-des had two wives (twin sisters resembling one another very closely), Bâchal and Kâchal by name. Both were childless, and both anxious to become mothers. Bâchal, perhaps even more than her sister, longed for the honour of maternity. In order to obtain her object, Bâchal served Guru Goracknâth, a celebrated yogi, in a menial capacity for some twelve years. The all-powerful yogi, who lived in the Rajah's garden at Bâgar, pleased with her assiduous attentions to him, promised that on a certain date he would grant her request. In the meanwhile, the Rajah's sister was doing her utmost to get him to repudiate Bâchal, who, she said, had degraded herself by performing menial offices even for a yogi, and ought to be sent back to her own people. Unaware of the intrigues in the palace, Bâchal was looking forward with eager hope to the fulfilment of the yogi's promise, which she had foolishly (as after events proved) made known to her twin sister Kâchal. On the appointed day Kâchal rose very early, and, trusting to the close resemblance she bore her twin sister, presented herself before the yogi, boldly asking him to redeem his promise. The holy man, unconscious of the deception that was being practised upon him, put two grains of wheat into her hand with instructions to eat them, upon doing which her desire would be accomplished. Thus reaping where she had not sown, the unscrupulous and unsisterly Kâchal hurried away home. A little later Bâchal

Cunningham's *Archæological Report for 1878-79*, vol. xiv. The General does not deal with the religious ceremonies and observances I have described.

named Sona and Mona, ready for use. The mother pointed out that the only carpenter available was blind, but the child got over that difficulty by telling her to instruct the carpenter in question to press his hands over his eyes and his sight would be restored. Everything turned out exactly as the child had predicted. The cart was duly made, the oxen found and yoked to it, and the journey towards Bâgar commenced. Freightened with such an important burden, the cart, as it passed along, seemed to shake the earth to its very foundations. The king of the *serpents* was in his subterranean kingdom, and sent some huge snakes to destroy the audacious mortals who dared to invade his repose. His commands were so far carried out, that the driver of the cart and the two oxen were killed; but Bâchal escaped on foot, and returned to her father's house in deep distress. She upbraided the child who had caused all this trouble, but he maintained that neither the oxen nor the driver were dead, and desired her to send men to inquire about them. True enough, they were found restored to life, and, after a little delay, the journey was resumed. The Rajah of Bâgar-des received his wife back again, and the marvellous child was ushered into the world with the customary rejoicings. Shortly after his birth he was, in accordance with universal custom in India, laid in the sun, in order to be purified by the rays of that god. He was left alone for a few minutes, and when his attendants returned they found him playing with a deadly cobra. They looked on in mute terror, which turned to horror and amazement when they saw him put the cobra's head

into his own mouth and suck it. The infant, *mirabile dictu*, suffered no harm, and this incident, I was gravely assured, gave rise to his popular name of Zâhir-Pir (or poison saint).¹ When he arrived at man's estate he succeeded his father on the *musnud*. Of course a wife was found for him, and while he was away from home on a visit to his bride's father, his brothers (the twin sons of Kâchal) plotted to seize the throne with the assistance of the Emperor of Delhi. The young prince had only just reached home with his bride, when he was obliged to defend himself against a force raised at Delhi and headed by his brothers. In hot haste he collected such of his men as were at hand, and mounting his steed Leilah, a foal of the mare that had been favoured with a bit of the yogi's apple, he set out to meet his adversaries. When about to start for the battlefield, his mother laid her solemn injunctions upon him to spare the lives of his brothers.

In the heat of the contest that ensued, Zâhir-Pir was miraculously protected from harm. The birds hovered over him to shield him from the sun, they received on their own wings the bullets that would have struck him. His mare Leilah performed wonders. She literally flew about, and in one of her wild swoops the Pir's sword struck off the heads of both his brothers at one stroke, and, in some inexplicable manner, they rolled into his lap. He gathered up his clothes round his waist with the two heads, and rode on. The chiefs thus disposed of, the

¹ General Cunningham says that this saint "received his title of Zâhir-Pir, or the 'manifested saint,' because he appeared to his wife after death" (Archæological Report, vol. xiv. p. 84).

battle was over. His enemies melted from the field, and Zâhir-Pir returned home. At the gate he was met by his mother, whose first question was about the fate of Kâchal's sons. Instead of replying, the exhausted soldier asked for water; but without giving him what he wanted she again pressed him for news of his brothers. Irritated at her solicitude regarding the fate of his treacherous foes, the victor told her that he had brought some cocoa-nuts for her, and, so saying, rolled out upon the floor the bloody heads, which he had carried in his girdle. The old Ranee started back with horror from these gory trophies, and in her indignation vowed that she would see her son's face no more.

Up to this time the prince had been a Hindu. He now turned Muhammadan, and went off alone on a pilgrimage to Mecca. His mother thought he was dead, and his young bride mourned his loss, but he came back safe and well, and secretly made himself known to his wife, whom he found means of visiting clandestinely. An evident change in the bearing and manners of the supposed widow, her cheerfulness and gaiety, so out of harmony with her condition, aroused the suspicions of the mother-in-law. The old Ranee reproached her daughter-in-law with forgetting her duty as a widow, and even accused her of unfaithfulness to her dead husband. Stung by the keen edge of the old lady's tongue, the princess determined to clear her character. She invited her mother-in-law to conceal herself in her bed-room at night. The prince came as usual. The mother recognized her son. All her maternal affection went out towards him, and, unmindful of her vow, she

rushed forward to embrace him; but the prince, who had been deeply mortified by his mother's conduct and her vow, fled away hastily and never returned again. His mother had him searched for high and low, far and near, but without avail. At length it was discovered that he had found a quiet refuge in the bosom of mother Earth, into which he had gently descended, steed and all, leaving only the head of his spear and the pennon attached to it to mark the spot of his engulfment. On this now sacred spot his mother erected a mausoleum, which is the centre of attraction to his followers.

Somehow this Pir has been specially selected as the patron saint of the Lalbagis, a section of the *Mehter* or sweeper caste, who, in affliction or trouble, vow to make certain offerings at his tomb, or in his name, in the hope, or on condition, that he will help them in their distress. But the tomb is remote from the great centres of population and wealth. Lalbagis, like other people, need some more present object to quicken their devotion and open their purse-strings than a distant grave. This the custodians of the tomb thoroughly understand, so they periodically send out missionaries to remind the Lalbagis of the necessity of contributing towards the maintenance of the tomb and its guardians, if they desire to enjoy a continuance of the blessings secured to them through the favour of the saint.

The missionaries, who are Mussulmans, go over the country promising the protection and good offices of the Pir to those who will become his followers. Offerings of some sort are, of course, expected, and empty-handed worshippers are of little account.

Men who in infancy were specially dedicated by their parents, with suitable ceremonies and offerings, to the saint of Bâgar, enjoy certain privileges on the occasions selected for publicly honouring their patron. As might have been expected, children devoted to the special service of the Pir are generally sickly ones, for whom his fostering care is deemed necessary.

In their periodical wanderings, the missionaries of the Zâhir-Pir grant, for a stipulated consideration, permission to a few mehters in each district to raise the standard of the saint for a fixed number of days, and to carry it about in procession. These privileged men are known as *Bhaggats*. I believe it is generally understood that they have visited the saint's tomb in person and been authorized on the spot "to raise his standard," as the phrase is. According to popular belief, the standard, at any rate a portion of it, is sent direct from the custodians of the Pir's tomb, in which it has been duly laid, thus acquiring the sacredness of the holy spot from the tomb itself. The custodians of the tomb at Bâgar exercise a sufficient control over the Bhaggats, and upon the observance by them of the usual practices. A case of irregularity happened in 1885. A Bhaggat, in order to steal a march upon the others, set up his standard before the usual time, and began to circumambulate the tomb for contributions. He met with tolerable success; but on the representation of the other Bhaggats he was fined and severely reprimanded by the missionaries from Bâgar, who moreover allowed the other Bhaggats to extract from him his irregularly-gotten gains.

The standard consists of a long bamboo tricked out with scraps of gay-coloured cloth, having at the top of it a sort of huge brush, covered on the outside with peacocks' feathers. Along the length of the pole are suspended bunches of cocoa-nuts, with fans and *moorchals*. This is the appearance it has to an uninitiated onlooker. Indeed, I was for a long time under the impression that the pole, with the tuft of feathers at the top, was nothing but a huge broom, the most important implement of the mehter's (sweeper's) trade. But I was utterly wrong. To the initiated this huge broom adorned with flags, fitted to a gigantic handle, and carried by a man, is transfigured into a *bridegroom dressed out in his wedding garments, and seated on horseback*. In fact, it represents *Zâhir-Pir* himself on the memorable occasion of his return home with his bride, the occasion on which he slew his half-brothers and incurred the displeasure of his mother. The cocoa-nuts, I presume, have some connection with the Pir's grim jest about the heads of the sons of Kâchal, but why there should be more than two suspended to the pole I failed to find out. In such cases consistency can hardly be expected, and should not, perhaps, be looked for. Already, it would appear, the symbolical character of the cocoa-nuts is forgotten, and it is an object of pride to the *Bhaggat* to outdo his rivals in the number of nuts suspended from his pole. The fans and *moorchals* are probably attached as emblems of royal, or at any rate of exalted, rank.

The dressing up of the pole, or standard as they call it, is quite an elaborate affair, and is carried out to the accompaniment of the drum and vocal music.

The tall bamboo is first anointed with mustard oil, next coloured with a yellow ochre, and then washed with milk sponged over it with a handful of *doob* grass. After these anointings and ablutions the *sirmohr*, or head-dress, is tied on. The head-dress is only worn by bridegrooms on their wedding day. Two large triangular pieces of cloth, one blue, the other red, are next attached to the pole, and the costume of the bridegroom is completed by the addition of a couple of fans, one or two moorchals, and a large number of cocoa-nuts tied about the place where his neck might have been and right away to the bottom of the pole.

The festival in honour of Zâhir-Pir takes place about the month of July or August every year. A great number of people assemble to see the standard raised, and follow it to the accompaniment of a noisy band of drummers and fifers. Disciples specially dedicated to the saint enjoy the privilege on such occasions of acting as his *horses*. They carry the standard by turns, supported in a sort of strong leather cup sewn on to a stout belt of the same material fastened round the waist. By this arrangement the hands are free to steady the pole and keep it erect. As each man (or "horse") receives the sacred burden, he salutes it with joined palms and a look of wrapt adoration, the genuine character of which there is no reason to doubt. The privilege of carrying the standard is a much coveted one. Each "horse," as he staggers about under the sacred burden, shouts out, "I am his horse," while the followers cry, "Victory to Zâhir-Pir." To carry the fiction of their equine nature still further, the "horses" are

had a bath and to have put on clean clothes. They are required to attend barefooted and to dispense with the luxury of an umbrella. Beyond following the standard and shouting "Zâhir-Pir Ke Jye," or victory to Zâhir-Pir, the adoration consists, practically, in a humble obeisance to the decorated pole on the part of each person, and the presentation of some gift, however trifling, to what we may call the lessees of the standard.

Women, always in an inferior position in the East, are on no account to touch the sacred pole. If they have offerings to make they hand them to the Bhaggat, who graciously accepts the gifts and then, after applying a bundle of peacock's feathers to the pole, touches the female worshippers with it in token of the Pir's goodwill and protection.

After being carried about for hours with deafening shouts and more deafening drumming, the standard is taken to a river, whither the other standards from the same town are also carried on the same day. The bearer steps into the stream and, raising some of the water in his hand, pays his respects to the river. A day or two later the standard is carried round on a begging expedition, which, in the particular case I took note of, was hardly successful, seeing that the net result of, the whole day's work was only one rupee and four annas. It is also taken on an appointed day to the house of any one who is willing to give a feast or a present in fulfilment of some vow or other.

On a bright moonlight night all the standards are set up in some populous centre, and a *melâ* or fair is held there. Stalls for the sale of sweets and tea, &c., are arranged upon the spot, and merry-go-rounds

are erected for the amusement of the young. Fun and frolic reign supreme, and the fair is kept up to a late hour. The hoarded or borrowed pice (more frequently the latter) are freely produced, and go to swell the gains of the enterprising dealers in the saint's good offices. On the following day all the standards are carried to some appointed meeting-place with any amount of tom-toming, singing, and noise. The cocoa-nuts are now removed from the sacred pole, and some of them are given as prizes to the successful competitors in foot-races or other sports, open to all comers. The remainder of the cocoa-nuts are distributed in little pieces to the saint's followers, by whom they are much prized as charms. In this distribution the "horses" get the largest share, and sometimes they even receive a small proportion of the Bhaggats' profits. It is easy to see how the honoured position accorded to the "horses" at these religious gatherings becomes an object of desire; and how parents, to secure the envied precedence for their sons on such public occasions, are willing to pay the price demanded by the dispensers of such favours. My inquiries satisfied me that, apart from any theoretical considerations, it was a subject of pride to a Mehter's family to have one member at least enrolled as one of the Pir's "horses."

The practical working of this system and the nature of the worship may be illustrated by the following facts. On one occasion of the annual celebration a quarrel arose as to who should carry the standard. One young man got possession of it, and was acting "horse," when he received a blow on the face which

caused the standard to sway and nearly fall to the ground. The blow which caused this was clearly an act of sacrilege. It was a blow given to a young man while acting in the capacity of "Ghora," or horse, to the "Pir Sahib," and could only be expiated by a heavy fine and a general feast to the caste fellows. There and then the excited crowd excommunicated the bold and impious man whose hand had struck the offensive blow, and it was months, nay years, before he was quite reinstated in social position amongst his brethren; not, indeed, until the emissaries from Bâgar had themselves condoned his rash act for a certain number of rupees and a promise of better behaviour in the future. On another occasion a young fellow entrusted with the standard allowed his attention to wander towards the women, and the pole became unsteady. A zealous, but too rash attendant, *not himself a Ghora*, carried away by his indignant feelings, ventured to strike the pole-bearer, and for this irregularity his hand became partially paralyzed, and only recovered its full power after years of propitiation had appeased the outraged saint. As for the too eager admirer of the fair sex, he became very ill and lost his life shortly after.

To give something of a serious, solemn character to the elevation of the Pir's standard, all the "horses" are required to undergo a sort of purificatory penance for a month previous to the ceremony. They are required to abstain from all indulgences, and to sleep not on a bed of any kind, but on the bare floor, alone, and quite apart from all other members of the family. When in attendance on the standard, they

are expected to keep their minds free from carnal thoughts and desires. I heard of the case of one man who met with a severe fall while attending the procession. The nature of the accident was much exaggerated, and was attributed to the Pir's anger at some unbecoming thoughts having entered into the mind of the sufferer. And within my own knowledge a case of severe illness was put down confidently to an infringement of the strict rules for the conduct of a pure life enjoined on these occasions. The Pir, unfortunately, cannot or will not give a favourable answer to every prayer. A little infant was dying in our compound of what seemed to me to be want of nourishment. The father begged a rupee and received it. I naturally concluded he would buy milk and such-like suitable food for the little starveling; but after the child's death, which took place within a day or two, I found out that the rupee had been put into a small bag and tied round the child's neck, with the vow that if Zâhir-Pir would preserve the little one's life, the rupee would be expended in the purchase of a kid to be sacrificed in his honour.

The curious cult of which I have just given an outline sketch is not undeserving of study. The Mehters are an inferior caste, subdivided into seven sub-castes, one of these (the Shaik) professing the Muhammadan religion. The other six sub-castes, including the Lalbagi, although reverencing the Brahmans and holding strictly enough to caste observances, do not, as far as I have been able to ascertain, consider themselves Hindus. Whether the Mehters are descendants of Hindu out-castes, or of aborigines who have adopted the caste system, I cannot say. At

the present day their occupation is for the most part that of sweepers and scavengers. The Lalbagis then, be it remembered, are rejected of Hinduism. They do not even call themselves Hindus, although often classed as such by Europeans. They are certainly not Mussulmans. But, like a race of out-castes, they haunt the outer courts of the temples of both religions to pick up such crumbs of comfort as they may be permitted to appropriate. They believe in the Brahman; they consult him on most occasions of life and he takes their money. The Mussulman Fakir is equally an object of veneration to them, and many an offering do they make on the graves of Syuds. Although neither Hindus nor Muhammadians, they take part in many festivals peculiar to the two creeds, and have succeeded in finding for themselves a patron saint who combines in himself the double advantage of having belonged at different times to both creeds, having been, as stated before, born a Hindu and dying a good Muslim.

The pole itself would seem to be essentially a compromise. A visible symbol as the object of worship was demanded; indeed more than that, an anthropomorphic symbol. But the stern and sweeping condemnation of idolatry in the Koran could not be disregarded by the Muhammadan custodians of the tomb. Out of these conflicting elements has come the decorated pole which I have described—a mere standard of the saint to those who desire to so regard it; but to the imaginative Lalbagi, a veritable representation of his patron at the most critical and interesting moment of his life.

When this cult arose, and how it arose, I have,

not been able to ascertain. For the patron saint no greater antiquity is at present claimed than the age of Akbar, A.D. 1556-1605.

What a certain popular school of mythologists could make out of the stories which have clustered about the name of Zâhir-Pir, I would not venture to say. Perhaps they could prove that the whole is a solar allegory; a myth of the dawn, or something of that sort. The Pir's voice before birth is perhaps the fresh breeze which precedes the rising sun. His conquest of the serpents, a victory over clouds and darkness. His wonderful horse is obviously one of the coursers of the sun. The journey *westward* to Mecca is the sun on his *westward* march, his temporary concealment is an eclipse, and his final disappearance beneath the earth only a sunset; while the spear-head left above the ground is surely a last lingering ray of the vanished sun striking across the sky and visible to men after the bright orb itself has sunk to rest. Comparative mythologists have not to be told, for the point is too obvious, that in this way the life of almost any famous man may be resolved into a solar myth. There are first the symptoms of his advent, then his early struggles, followed by the dangers and conflicts of manhood. To this succeeds his meridian splendour, then his gradual decay, and

* The idea of the superiority of a saintly child to the terrible destructive power of serpents is an old one, and occurs in the mythology of many nations. "Thus it is said that Ali, when an infant, was left alone in Mecca, the inhabitants, including his parents, having fled at the approach of a huge dragon. The infant rent it asunder by the jaws" (Conway's "Demonology," vol. ii. p. 12).

his disappearance into the bosom of mother earth. Finally his spiritual re-birth. Mr. Tylor has shown admirably, and most ingeniously, how even a nursery rhyme, like "four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie," may be explained as a solar myth. But we have so many old stories explained as solar myths or myths of the dawn or fire, that one can hardly resist the temptation of speculating regarding the fate of such a legend as that of Zâhir-Pîr in the hands of certain professed comparative mythologists. We are told that—

"The story of Herakles life and labours is a pure but most elaborate sun-myth. From his birth, where he strangles the serpents in his cradle—the serpents of darkness, like the python which Apollo slew—through his *Heracleian* labours to his death, we watch the labours of the sun through the mists and clouds of heaven to its ruddy setting ; and these stories are so like to others which are told of the northern Herakles, Thor, that we cannot refuse to believe that they were known in the main in days before there were either Greek-speaking Greeks or Teutons."¹

Again, the well-known story of William Tell, which proved to have really no foundation in history, is, it appears, nothing but a solar myth :

"William Tell, whether of Cloudland or Altdorf, is the last reflection of the beneficent divinity of daytime and summer, constrained for a while to obey the caprice of the powers of cold and darkness, as Apollo served Laomedon, and Herakles did the bidding of Lurystheus. His solar character is well preserved, even in the sequel of the Swiss legend, in which he appears no less skilful as a steersman than as an archer, and in which, after traversing, like Dagon, the tempest-

¹ Kearny's "The Dawn of History," p. 136.

climate is the most striking object in nature. As to Zâhir-Pir, I think we need not resolve him into an unsubstantial solar myth; but may without much scruple admit that the original of the extravagant legend given in the preceding pages did really walk the earth in human form, and was buried at Bâgar in the desert of Bikanir—although it would be very unwise to follow the Euhemeristic method of simply stripping off all improbabilities in the legend and accepting the remainder as genuine history.

IV.

THE ARYA SAMAJ AND ITS FOUNDER.

THE presence, as rulers, of the Muhammadans in India ever since the beginning of the eleventh century has had an influence upon the religious development of the Hindus, which the historical student can hardly help noting, as successive Hindu reformers appear—at long intervals it is true—on the stage of Indian history, bearing aloft the standard of revolt against the national polytheism and the rigid distinctions of caste. The direct influence of Islam on the teaching of many Indian reformers is unquestionable, and that particular form of the Muhammadan religion known as Sufism—which, in all probability, owes its origin to a Hindu source (the Vedanta philosophy)—was welcomed home, as it were, by certain Hindus with a warmth which a purely exotic system of ideas would not have called forth.

One important religious reformation, Sikhism, alluded to in a subsequent part of this volume, was undoubtedly due to the stimulating presence of Islam and the natural leaning of the Indian mind to the

doctrines held by the Sufis. The theistic reforms now agitating India are, however, of a somewhat different character from those which preceded them, and bear the unmistakable stamp of Christian influence and of English political and social ideas and principles.

There have been two distinct developments of the modern theistic movement in India, known respectively as the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj. The former is well known in Europe, because the leaders of the sect have been men who deliberately kept themselves as prominently as possible before the English world, visited England, won the personal regard of many Europeans both at home and in India, and unintentionally raised false hopes of their conversion to the religion of Christ. Indeed it is not too much to say that the appreciative welcome given to Brahmoism by many pious Europeans was due to a belief that Brahmoism was the first step towards a great turning of the people of India to the Christian faith.

The Arya Samaj which forms the subject of this paper, though perhaps not less interesting than the Brahmo Samaj, is younger, and is certainly less known in Europe.

In November, 1879, a young native gentleman who was well aware of the lively interest I took in the movements for religious and social reform which had for some time past been agitating native society through the length and breadth of India, placed in my hands a programme of the proceedings to be observed on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Lahore Arya Samaj, or Aryan Society. I have

these would-be reformers, however utopian many of their schemes, it is impossible not to sympathize with their earnest aspirations for the intellectual and social advancement of their countrymen, and it was with much pleasure that I found my young friends awaiting my arrival at the city gate. Here I had to quit my carriage, for it could not go into the narrow crowded thoroughfares of the native quarter which lay within the gate, and with my companions I walked up the lanes which led to the premises of the Arya Samaj. On the doorway was a board bearing, in large English characters, the words "Arya Samaj," and below that, in smaller characters, the same words in Hindi and Urdu.

Ascending a flight of stairs and passing through a narrow passage, we entered an open space or court, bounded on one side by high and on the remaining three sides by low buildings. The place of meeting was a very humble one, with unsightly walls all round and the open canopy of heaven overhead. In one corner was a recess, perhaps six feet square, roofless like the other portions of the court. Here preparations had been made for the performance of the *Hom* sacrifice. Floor-cloths had been laid down for the visitors to sit upon, and festoons of leaves had been hung in great loops right round the inclosure. The entrance to the little recess where the *Hom* was to be performed was specially adorned in homely but not ungraceful style. A green plantain tree had been placed on each side of the entrance, and garlands of leaves and flowers had been hung between them. These simple attempts at decoration were not displeasing to the eye, and gave

glance at the paper showed me that besides the usual reading of reports and election of officers, appropriate to the occasion, there were to be hymns and prayers, lectures in Hindi and English, and the celebration of the "Hom."

As the opportunity was one well worth improving, I made up my mind to be present during a portion, at least, of the ceremonies of the day, particularly the *Hom*¹ sacrifice.

By 7 a.m. of the appointed Sunday, I arrived in my carriage at the Shahalmi gate of the city.² There I was joined by several of those bright-faced intelligent youths to be found at the present day in every town of British India, who, under the stimulus of Western education, are in a state of intellectual restlessness, eager for reforms and innovations in what they feel is a backward state of society, and who, with the generous ardour and confidence of boys, hope to be able to recast, upon an improved model, institutions which are the outcome of a hundred influences operating through many an eventful century. But however crude the ideas of

¹ "Homā—a sort of burnt-offering which can be made by Brahmans only. It is only made on special occasions, such as the celebration of a festival, the investiture of a young Brahman with the sacred thread, marriages and funerals. The method of making it is as follows: During the utterance of Mantras, five species of consecrated wood, together with the Dharba grass, rice and butter, are kindled and burnt, and the fire is then kept burning as long as the festival or ceremony lasts. Great efficacy is ascribed to this rite."—Garrett's "Classical Dictionary of India."

² The "city" is the native town, outside of which lies the European quarter of Lahore.

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the meeting-place something of a holiday look. At one end of the open court was placed a small table covered over with a white cloth of English manufacture. Upon it were ranged three brass vases containing flowers. At this table the lecturer stood when, in his appointed turn, he addressed the audience "on the wants of our country." Somewhat in advance of the table, *i.e.*, a little nearer to the centre of the court, there was a small carpet, and a very low table, just a few inches high. These were for the use of the Guru when he read to the audience out of the Vedas.

At the other end of the court three or four musicians were squatted tuning their instruments in a listless fashion. A little way behind them I noticed the Society's charity-box, marked in English and two vernacular languages, the uppermost line and the largest characters being English. There were not more than twenty-five persons in the place when I entered it, but the number gradually increased to about one hundred and fifty men and children. No women were present in the assembly, but I was told that there were a number of them ~~congregated~~ in the upper rooms overlooking the court. None, however, were visible, and I dare say ~~that~~ of the fair ladies behind the purdahs understood little and cared less for the new-fangled proceedings of the Arya Samaj. Those of them who comprehended the matter were, in all probability, opposed to a movement which, if successful, would isolate ~~em~~ from the pomp and excitement of the polytheistic idolatry in which they had been reared. Indeed the woman of India, brought up in

the seclusion of the Zenanas, are, as I have often been told by respectable Indian gentlemen, an insurmountable obstacle to reforms which would simplify the ritual of their religion or lead to the abolition of objectionable but time-honoured rites, ceremonies, and festivals.

The reader who has followed me thus far will, if not already familiar with the subject, wish to be informed who the members of the Arya Samaj are—what distinctive doctrines they profess, and what common objects they have set before themselves? In answer to which questions I shall here quote a passage from a letter which appeared in a Lahore newspaper under the signature of "An Arya," as it gives sufficient information for my present purpose :

"The Arya movement in the Punjab began with the advent of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in the beginning of 1877. This learned Pandit, who is regarded by the people of India as the greatest Vedic scholar of the age, in that year delivered a series of lectures on the ancient civilization of the country. The eyes of the educated community were at once opened. They saw that the reforms which they were advocating, and to which there was so much opposition in the land, could easily be carried out by throwing off all the accumulated excrescences which had grown upon their religious and social systems during the lapse of ages, and by falling back upon their pristine books of authority, *the Vedas*. Dreading still further the growth of materialistic and atheistic views in the country, it was considered expedient to establish places of congregational worship where all should meet once a week to pray and hear lectures and sermons delivered.

"Within the last two years these Samajes which exist in the Punjab, the North-west, and the Deccan have acted as so many safeguards of public morals. They admit among their body all who believe in one God, discard idolatry and regard the Vedas as the original revelation given to man. Their meetings

are open and resorted to by the Hindus and Muhammadans and Christians *all alike*. Such are the aims and such the scope of this useful institution¹

The religious writings known as the Vedas to which the members of the Arya Samaj have turned as the original, and perhaps sole, revelation given by God to man are four in number, the earliest being a collection of over a thousand hymns, which, according to our best authorities, date from 1500 to 1000 B.C. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* are of various dates and separate origins, and were, for centuries, preserved orally in different priestly or minstrel families, till finally brought together and embodied in one comprehensive collection such as has been preserved to our own day.² Older than the poems of Homer, older than the psalms of David, these venerable hymns are amongst the earliest yearnings of the human heart towards the Deity, which have been preserved to later ages in the records of the past, and must ever possess a special and unique value in the eyes of the student of the evolution of religious thought. The Vedic hymns embody the simple prayers of a pastoral people addressed to the clouds, the storm, the sun, the sky, the dawn, and other such objects and natural phenomena, and reflect, as in a mirror, the grand and ever-varying features of the giant snow-capped mountains over which the wandering Aryans had found their way from "the roof of the world" to the plains of

¹ "Civil and Military Gazette," March 6, 1879.

² Prof.-Max Dunker's "Ancient History of India," p. 28, on the authority of Prof. Max Muller's "History of Sanskrit Literature."

Northern India. In the Vedic hymns the gods are invited to come down and partake of the sacrifices offered to them, and, in return, are called upon to provide pasture for the cattle and horses, to fill the udders of the cows, to bestow health, wealth, and long life, to afford protection to man and beast against the evil spirits, and to grant their worshippers victory over the enemies of the tribe. *

The second, or *Yajur Veda*, prescribes the forms and ceremonies to be observed in the performance of the sacrifices appropriate to different occasions. The third, or *Sama Veda*, consists of a selection of hymns from the *Rig Veda*, to be sung when the juice of the Soma plant was the principal offering made to the gods. The fourth, and last Veda, called the *Atharva Veda*, is a collection of spells, charms, and incantations against sickness and death.

Although the Vedic hymns are plainly the outcome of a very primitive society which had not emerged from the tribal condition, and, although the religion of the Sanskrit-speaking Aryans was chiefly *physiocracy*, or the worship of the forces and phenomena of nature, yet there is in the hymns ample evidence of the fact that, at a very early date, polytheistic, pantheistic, and monotheistic conceptions had all been arrived at by the Aryan *rishis*, and had found expression in immortal song.¹ Indeed, the fact that they lend themselves to all forms of religious thought is what gives to the Vedas their wonderful vitality. Add to this that it was in the Punjab that these

¹ Edgar Quinet's "Le génie des Religions," p. 119. Prof. Sir Monier Williams' "Religious Thought and Life in India," p. 7.

songs of the foreworld first rose to heaven with the patriarchal sacrifices of the earliest Aryan settlers in India, and there is no room for wonder that the Vedas, and the literature that has grown out of them, are objects of especial and fervent veneration to the Hindus of the Land of the Five Rivers, or of the seven rivers of the Vedic poets.

The youthful society, which is the subject of this paper, apparently desires, and perhaps deems it an easy task to revive in these days the long extinct Vedic religion, or, as they prefer to call it, *Vedic Theism* of the Sanskrit-speaking Aryans. What the religion of the Vedas really was it may be no easy task to make out now. A competent authority—Professor Sir Monier Williams—says:

“Although the majority of the Hindus believe that the four Vedas contain all that is good, great, and divine, yet these compositions will be found, when taken as a whole, to abound more in puerile ideas than in lofty conceptions. At the same time it is clear that they give no support to any of the present objectionable usages and customs for which they were once, through ignorance of their contents, supposed to be an authority. The doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, which became an essential characteristic of Brahmanism and Hinduism in later times, has no place in the religion of the Veda. Nor do the hymns give any sanction to the prohibition of widow-marriages, the general prevalence of child-marriages, the tyrannical sway of caste, the interdiction of foreign travel, and the practice of idolatry.”¹

It would appear that the Aryas of our day under the leadership of a Mahratta Brahman named Dayanand Saraswati, have agreed to put their faith

¹ “Religious Thought and Life in India,” p. 18.

in the *Rig* and *Yajur* Vedas with the commentaries upon them, written prior to the date of the *Mahabharata*. What doctrines the modern believers in these Vedas actually profess to find sanctioned by the old books, whose authority they acknowledge, I shall endeavour to state, briefly, later on. But I may here remark that Dayanand's views and opinions are rank heresies, stoutly opposed by the orthodox pandits, who, at a large and influential meeting held in Calcutta in the year 1881, placed on record, for the benefit of the Hindu public, their own decision in regard to what books were to be regarded as authoritative scripture, and affirmed very plainly their approval of practices which had been condemned by the reformer.

The *Hom* had not been commenced when I entered the premises of the Arya Samaj. Through the courtesy of certain native gentlemen connected with the ceremonies of the day, I was assigned a seat quite near the place where the sacrifice was to be offered, and had the best possible opportunity of witnessing all the arrangements for, and the entire details of, the interesting performance. The fuel (neatly cut pieces of dry wood) was arranged in a little square sacrificial pit. At each of the four corners of the pit stood a small black candle, if I may call it so, about six inches in height, made up of fragrant gums and other combustibles. Round the sacrificial pit were placed five brass vessels, one containing *ghee* (clarified butter), and the other four a mixture of various grains and spices moistened with *ghee* and milk. A young *Sannyasr*, learned in Sanskrit-lore, presided at the ceremonies. He was

well and warmly attired, and wore on his head a conspicuous turban of orange-yellow cloth.

The firewood and the four odorous candles were ignited, and then the priest commenced to recite Sanskrit mantras, each of which ended with the word *Svaha*, which served as a signal for pouring a ladleful of ghee upon the fire, and casting into it a small quantity of the other offerings.

The language of the golden-tongued *rishis*, the dead language of the dead gods of a long past age, sounded strange, as the Sannyasi rolled out in slow and measured tones the mystic texts appropriate to the occasion. When the whole string of selected mantras had been repeated, some portion of the oblations still remained in the plates. In a whispered consultation amongst the officiating priests it was arranged that the leaders should repeat the *Gayatri*¹ over and over again, while the five assistants kept feeding the flames with the offerings, until the whole quantity that had been provided should be duly consumed.

It is hardly necessary to say with what interest I watched this ceremonial which the Sanskrit-speaking Aryans had practised so many centuries ago at the very dawn of the historical period. But I could not help feeling that the ancient rite had quite lost what significance it might have had in the old time,

¹ The *Gayatri* is a form of prayer, consisting of ten Sanskrit words, which should be used by all Hindus daily, both morning and evening. It is translated as follows by Prof. Monier Williams: "Let us meditate (or we meditate) on that excellent glory of the divine vivifier. May he enlighten (or stimulate) our understandings" ("Hinduism," p. 61).

and that, as performed in my presence that day, it was but a lifeless ghost, a hollow ceremonial, meaningless to the spectators and entirely uncalculated to awaken in them any feelings of enthusiasm, of reverence, or even of solemnity. The attendants, it is true, performed their office with decorum, but I looked in vain for any indication of deep feeling or genuine interest on their features. As for the on-lookers, they watched the performance as they might have watched a small bonfire, and listened with dull unconscious ears to the mantras, the Sanskrit language being quite unknown to nearly all of them. Some, indeed, were even less attentive than that. While the *Hom* sacrifice was being performed I noticed two or three young men leaning over the table in the reading-room looking through the newspapers.

In the old time the fire for such a sacrifice would have been kindled by the friction of two pieces of wood, and the goddess of fire (*Agni*) would thus have been mysteriously born again, under the hands of the operator, as the fire-drill (which, if we are to believe the philologists, gave rise to the myth of Prometheus),¹ gradually elicited the living, glowing flames from the dark inert timber. But the obtaining of fire by the friction of wood is a troublesome process, and so our modern *Aryas* preferred the simpler plan of igniting the fuel in the sacrificial pit by means of live charcoal brought from the domestic hearth.

I was amused and interested to find in conversation with several members of the Samaj, that they

¹ Fiske's "Myths and Myth makers," p. 64

were disposed to deny the sacrificial character of the *Hom* and to maintain that it was intended to purify the air, for here, as elsewhere, the *Zeitgeist* is too strong to allow of the revival of the old worn-out religions, except as solemn mockeries of things long dead.

At the termination of the *Hom* the musicians struck up a hymn, singing, in a clear but subdued tone, to the accompaniment of their instruments. In regard to Hindu, or any other music, I am not competent to give a critical opinion, but the hymns sung on this occasion had certainly a plaintive sweetness of their own, which was exceedingly agreeable to my ear. The hymns for the day, some in Hindu and some in Punjabi, had been selected from a collection which had been made and printed for the use of the Samaj. But the choir, strange to say, consisted of hired singers of the *Muhammadian* religion, with no faith or heart in the ceremonies or the beliefs of the Aryas. This fact alone would indicate the artificial character of the entire arrangement, and would serve to show how utterly futile is the attempt to revive, for any beneficial purpose, the obsolete practices of a long-past age. As soon as the selected hymns had all been sung, the lecturer took his place at the table. He first repeated the *Gayatrī* in slow devout tones, and, in a quavering voice, pronounced the mystic *Om* with marked solemnity. So much had I heard and read about the pious horror of the orthodox twice-born Hindu, at the mere thought of uttering this sacred word in the hearing of an outcaste or an unbeliever, that I was not a little surprised to hear it pronounced so

most satisfactory results. Not long ago a Hindu wrote strongly against "the custom of using obscene language on the occasion of marriage ceremonies," and the singing of immoral songs in the streets by women of respectable families and good position, on the occasion of Hindu festivals (*Regenerator* or *Aryavarta*, 22nd December, 1884), and I was told by a young Hindu friend of mine that the *Khattris* in Lahore had taken up the matter in an earnest, practical spirit, and that the *panchyats* of the caste had determined to impose a fine upon any *Khattiri* whose wife indulged in obscene songs in the streets of Lahore. Even trifling matters are not above the notice of these energetic reformers, *e.g.*, it has been the custom, at all seasons of the year, to carry, as at present, on the occasion of a visit from the bridegroom's family to the bride's family, two large earthen vessels containing curds. Now, in the hot weather in India, these curds are usually an utter abomination of bad odours, but the practice was still rigidly, I may say religiously, maintained. The Lahore *panchyat* have now pronounced the observance of this custom unnecessary. From these examples it will be apparent that an honest desire for social improvement has taken possession of a large section of the Hindu community, and that real good work will be done.

At the conclusion of the lecture the musician again struck up a hymn, and, while they were chanting it, two or three men went round casting flowers over the visitors, and throwing garlands of flowers about their necks. One was placed in my hand, with the remark in English, "Of course, you

need not put this on." And thus ended the proceedings announced for the forenoon of that day.

Three years later, in November, 1882 (or, as the public notice put it, in "the Aryan era, 1,960,892,983"), I again attended the anniversary celebration of the Samaj. There was not much to note in the way of change. Even the Mussalman musicians were in attendance, as in 1879. But such changes as attracted my attention were in the right direction. The meeting-place, the same as on the occasion previously described, showed some well-meant attempts at decoration. I noticed that a couple of small-sized wall-mirrors had been hung up, and that something had been done to cover the bare, unsightly, and dilapidated surrounding walls. The gathering, moreover, was larger than on the occasion of my previous visit, and there were not wanting signs of a healthy and more extended interest in the work of the Society. In fact, the Arya Samaj was clearly getting on in the world. But as clearly also it was experiencing the fate of all more or less successful movements. It was struggling against the opposition aroused by its growth at the expense of older institutions. There appeared to be a controversial tone in the addresses delivered, and it was considered desirable to affirm frequently (evidently in reply to objectors) that the *Hom* was not a religious observance, that it was not a worship of *Agni* (fire); but was carried out from purely sanitary considerations; since the products of the combustion of the particular substances diffused through the atmosphere of a assembly were of a distinctly healthful character.

In private conversation with me a member of the Samaj supported this view with some warmth, referring to the common practice of disinfecting barracks, hospitals, and infected places generally by sulphur fumigation. But the reader does not need to be told that the *Hom*, accompanied as it is by the solemn recital of sacred Sanskrit mantras, carried out in the open air, at a professedly religious gathering is not, in any sense, analogous to the ordinary process of purifying an unwholesome place by disinfectants. Beside, it is well known that to *Agni* (fire) the greatest number of invocations are addressed in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, and that the idea involved in the ordinary Vedic sacrifice is that the gods are gratified and nourished by the aroma of the burnt-offering.¹ Indeed it would be impossible for a religion based on the Vedas to get on at all without *sacrifices* which seem to be the very essence of the Vedic religion.²

The truth, apparently, is that at the formation of the Samaj, when idolatrous rites were proscribed, the *Hom* was retained on account of its Vedic origin, and also, perhaps, as a sort of connecting link with Brahmanism, from which ancestral religion the members of the new Samaj (either through prudence, or from feelings of tender association) could not quite break away. But opponents, both orthodox and heterodox, having taken exception to

¹ Prof. Sir Monier Williams' "Religious Thought and Life in India," p. 12.

² On this subject the reader may consult "Cosmology of the *Rig Veda*," by H. W. Willis, 1887. Williams and Norgate, London.

the *Hom* as being inconsistent with the purely theistic pretensions of the Arya Samaj, it has now become a stumbling-block to the Society. It remains to be seen whether the reasonable objections of opposing sects will make the Samaj abandon a ceremony which is admittedly not of religious significance, or whether it will arouse a spirit of obstinate conservatism, tending to the retention of the *Hom* at all costs.

The anniversary meeting of November, 1882, was the subject of an article in "The Arya Magazine." Here is an extract from it :

"The long, spacious, and lofty hall of the Samaj was tastefully carpeted on the occasion. Silken and laced hangings adorned the windows. Large mirrors in magnificent frames, principles of the Samaj, written in letters of gold, and other mantras from the Vedas in variegated hues, made the room sumptuous with glowing colours. Two grand tables stood east and west of the hall ; on one were arranged books for sale, and on the other prizes for girls. Between these two there was another table covered with precious cloth for the lecturer. Bunches of flowers in slender marble vases were arranged on either side of the table, and a highly valuable timekeeper stood in the middle. *Parterres* of flowers of every form and hue were arranged alongside the walls, and beauties of blooming nature were surrounding the hall. In the north a *Hom* (Kund) altar was made which was surrounded by grown-up plantain trees, and a long chain of flowers of different colours encircled them all. Wreaths of flowers entwined with evergreen were adjusted on the borders of each window. The whole hall presented a scene more enchanting than a poet's dream of Eden—a Puranic-man's vision of paradise. It was a rapture merely to sit there and breathe, though every other faculty were suspended.

"The entrance was also as much beautified as the inner hall . . ."

As the above glowing description seems to have been intended seriously, one can only wonder at the writer's unbridled imagination which could transform the whole scene so completely. Possibly for persons whose ordinary surroundings are unlovely in the extreme, the simple and not inappropriate decorations of the meeting-place may have had an exceptional charm; but there can be no excuse whatever for writing of an open court, roofed only by the canopy of heaven, as a "*lofty hall*." The entire description, reproduced above, is instructive as a bit of unblushing exaggeration, and as an example (only too common) of that predilection for brag and utter disregard of strict accuracy which so constantly and disagreeably obtrudes itself upon the attention of the real friends of India. It is proper to add that the Arya Samaj cannot be held responsible for the description which I have criticised above, as "*The Arya Magazine*," although devoted to the interests of the Samaj is, I understand, a purely private undertaking.

Of the life of Dayanand Saraswati Swami, the founder and acknowledged head of the Arya Samaj, something is known, and that of so interesting a character, that I shall not apologize for introducing it in this place. In the latter part of 1879 Dayanand commenced the publication of his autobiography in the pages of "*The Theosophist*," from which source most of the particulars respecting his personal history here given have been drawn.

According to the Swami's narrative, he had been carefully instructed in the Vedas, which means that

he had been made to commit a great portion of them to memory, and had been initiated at an early age into the rites and mysteries of the Seva sect to which his family belonged; but while still a mere boy his mind had revolted against the practices of idolatry. He could not bring himself to acknowledge that the image of Siva seated on his bull, the helpless idol which, as he had himself observed in the watches of the night, allowed the mice to run over it with impunity, ought to be worshipped as the Omnipotent Deity. To quote the autobiography :

"Is it possible, I asked myself, that this semblance of man, the idol of a *personal* god, that I see bestriding his bull before me, and who, according to all religious accounts, walks about, eats, sleeps, and drinks, can hold a trident in his hand, beat upon his dumroo (drum), and pronounce curses upon men, is it possible that he can be the Mahadeva, the Great Deity?"

The sudden death of a sister produced a great impression on the naturally religious temperament of the young man. He resolved to give up the world and to devote himself entirely to a religious life. To marriage he had an extreme aversion, but his parents, believing that domestic life would tend to wean the young enthusiast from his religious mania, were all the more anxious to give him a wife, and made arrangements accordingly. Dayanand, however, now twenty-one years of age, ran away from home to avoid matrimony, and set out upon his wanderings with the object of pursuing, without let or hindrance, the study of metaphysics, a branch of knowledge which he hoped to acquire from the

learned and devout pandits, sannyasis, and yogis, to be found in different parts of India.

After leaving home he got himself admitted into the ascetic order of the Brahmacharees, and was wandering about in the habit of that order, and under a new name, when his father, a respectable man in easy circumstances, who had been constantly in search of his runaway son, at length traced him successfully and came up with him. The Swami relates most naïvely, and with apparent unconsciousness of the ugliness of falsehood and duplicity, that on the sudden and unwelcome appearance of his father, he at once assured the old man, falling at his feet in the most abject manner to appease his wrath, that in leaving home he had acted upon bad advice, that, like a true prodigal son, he was returning home, that his father's arrival at this critical moment was most providential, and that he would willingly accompany his parent back to his native village. The father, however, did not trust his pious son's protestations. He placed Dayanand under surveillance, but the young man managed to elude the vigilance of his guards and effected his escape, to pursue, without further hindrance from his parents (for they appear to have quite lost all trace of him), his wandering life of adventure in quest of knowledge.

Amidst pathless jungles, in busy cities, and amongst the snows of the Himalayas, did Dayanand travel for years with supreme indifference to bodily hardships; conversing and disputing with learned pandits and holy ascetics, ever in earnest search of "the secret knowledge, the Vidya, or true erudition of

a genuine Yogi: the Mooktee, which is reached only by the purity of one's soul and *certain attainments*, unattainable without it. Meanwhile, the performance of all the duties of man towards his fellow-men, and the elevation of humanity thereby." Such is the statement of the object of his life which the Swami gave to the inquiring head of a prosperous monastery; but it would be very interesting to learn what Dayanand's idea of duty to his fellow-men really was, and whether his social and moral code recognized the obligations of honest labour instead of vagrancy, and strict honesty in word and deed. "It is the duty of every son to serve his parents with all possible devotion while they are still living"—a precept laid down by Dayanand himself—is in curious contrast with his own conduct towards his parents, and only shows how little theoretical ideas of right and wrong govern men's actions.

From the many interesting anecdotes of adventure included in the autobiography, there are a few well worth reproducing here, as they throw some light upon the character of the man, upon the present state of Hindu education, upon the mental unrest so prevalent amongst earnest thinkers in India, and upon the chaotic state of opinion amongst them.

Once, in his wanderings, Dayanand made the acquaintance of some Raj pandits of great learning, and was invited to dinner by one of them. He went, but what was his horror to find a large company of pandits assembled round a meat dinner, apparently including beef (for he refers to these pandits as

"beef-eating". Dayanand turned away in disgust from the repast, and hurried from the spot.

In his pursuit of the so-called science of Yog, the enthusiastic ascetic had been studying certain works which treated of the nervous system. He had not succeeded in grasping the descriptions and explanations he had read and pondered over, and began to doubt their correctness. While in this frame of mind, he happened to see a corpse floating down the river, and resolved, there and then, to bring to the test of actual comparison with nature the anatomical science of his books. He entered the river, dragged the corpse out of the water, and "with a large knife" commenced a dissection, which resulted in his satisfying himself that the books were totally and entirely incorrect, whereupon he tore them into pieces, and flung them into the river along with the mutilated corpse. Dayanand does not state what particular points of human anatomy he wished to clear up, and, when one calls to mind the refined methods of modern research, there is something droll about his proceeding to carry out his anatomical investigations "with a large knife." But even such a rude instrument would be quite aid enough to demonstrate the untruth of much that is affirmed regarding the structure of the human body in Hindu books on anatomy. For instance, it is asserted in such works, and currently believed by the pandits, that six organs, known as *chakras* or wheels, somewhat resembling the lotus are to be found in the human body, placed one above the other, and joined together by three connecting vessels. These *chakras* have different colours, and from four to sixteen petals.

But wild as are these statements they are sober when compared with the still more imaginative declaration that the human body contains a tortoise, a serpent, a goose, and fire. Whatever may have been the origin of these fanciful statements, a native writer in "The Calcutta Review,"¹ assures us that they are now accepted as verities by the Brahmans and, of course, by orthodox Hindus in general. Such being the teachings of Hindu anatomical science, we need be at no loss to understand how readily the Swami could, with the aid of his large knife, satisfy himself that they were utterly false and nothing but impudent fabrications, if, indeed, they were ever intended to be taken literally. At the same time, the fact that Dayanand could handle a corpse, and actually dissect it, proves to what a degree he had emancipated himself from the ordinary, but deep-rooted prejudices of Hinduism. The grand figure of the Mahratta Brahman, angrily and contemptuously consigning to the flowing river the so-called *science* of his ancestors will make an excellent subject for the Hindu painter when, at some future time, art in India, rising above the very narrow conventionalities which have characterized it so long, shall attain a true conception of its scope and limits.

During his wandering life Dayanand, according to his own confession, acquired the habit of using *bhang* to such an extent as to be at times under its intoxicating influence. While in this condition the houseless ascetic sought shelter one rainy night in the veranda of a temple of the bull-god Nandi.

¹ Art. "Physical Errors of Hinduism," by Daboo Bipin Behari Shome, "Calcutta Review," June, 1849.

For him the huge idol which stood there had no sanctity, as he had long enjoyed the full assurance that he himself was Brahma—"a portion of Brahm; Jiv (soul) and Brahm, the deity, being one." So, finding the hollow interior of the god a convenient resting-place, he crept into it, and fell asleep. In the morning a woman came to the idol with her simple offerings of sugar and curds, and, mistaking the Swami for an incarnation of the god himself, begged him to accept her gifts. Dayanand, being hungry, was nothing loath to oblige her, and disposed of the curds and sugar without, as he says, attempting to disabuse her of her false impression with regard to his divinity. He adds, thankfully, that the curds presented by the woman, being sour, served to cure him of the effects of the *bhāng*,¹ which he had been indulging in. For how much of his ecstatic visions and self-hallucinations the yogi is indebted to *bhāng* it would be profitless to speculate, but that that powerful narcotic contributes largely towards the creation of his wild fancies no reasonable person will doubt.

Dayanand's life is, in some respects, a good example of that led by hundreds, I may say thousands, of men in India, who for various and very opposite reasons adopt the wandering habits of one or other of the ascetic orders. Supported by the voluntary liberality of the people, these restless spirits travel immense distances over the country, carrying with them, to the remotest corners of the land, the ideas fermenting in the minds of the more vigorous leaders of Hīndu theological speculation.

¹ "Theosophist," vol. ii. p. 47.

The adventures incident to their vagabond life, unaccompanied as it is by either special danger or peculiar hardship, have charms sufficient for the majority of idle men who take up the calling of yogi or sannyasi. But the more earnest souls amongst them are often driven to despair by discovering the immorality, greed, selfishness, shallowness, and presumption of teachers of great reputation to whose feet they have come for knowledge. Disillusioned, they fall back upon that grand resource of the Hindu for solving the mysteries of the universe—*silent and solitary contemplation*. They retire to some lone place to think out the dark problem of existence, and, if their lives are spared for a few years, acquire, in proportion to their eccentricity and repulsiveness, the reputation of immense sanctity and superhuman wisdom.

Dayanand, however, was made of different stuff. Endowed with a robust frame and commanding stature, a self-reliant nature, a masterful temper, much knowledge of Hindu literature, and great eloquence, the Mahratta Brahman came forward as an aggressive reformer. Eager to establish the correctness of his own views he was ever ready to meet, in open discussion, Hindu pandits, Christian missionaries, or Muhammadan moulvis, and, if his admiring followers are to be believed, quite as willing to convince an adversary with a stick as with a syllogism. It should be added here that, although he did not retire altogether from active life to end his days in the solitude of some lone forest or mountain cave, the reformer, like the great majority of his countrymen, was a firm believer in the importance

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death of the Hindu reformer. And let European science offer what explanation it may regarding the phenomena referred to; let it eventually demonstrate the remarkable fore- and after-glow in the skies to be due to aqueous vapour, cosmic dust, or volcanic ashes, as the case may be, the more ignorant followers of Dayanand will, in all probability, ever connect the phenomena in question with the death of their venerated leader. As time goes by the death-scene will, in all likelihood, become, by an addition here and another there, more and more striking and impressive, until, at last, future generations will be asked to believe that the soul of the Indian prophet returned to God amidst the most awful convulsions of nature.

For years previous to his death the learned Swami was engaged upon a most interesting and important task—a translation into Hindi of both the *Rig* and *Yajur Vedas*.¹ This interpretation of the oldest of Sanskrit books, although not accepted by the orthodox Hindus, would, no doubt, repay translation into English.

What Dayanand has done in his Hindi version of the Vedas is to give a *rationalistic* interpretation of these ancient writings. On the assumption that the Vedas are a direct revelation from the Supreme Being, it follows that they must be correct, and, therefore, cannot possibly conflict with God's other revelation to man, viz., the truths of science, physical and natural. Nothing, therefore, is necessary, but

¹ "Veda-Bhashya, by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. A correct translation of *Rig* and *Yajur Vedas* as taught by Rishis in Anti-Mahabharat period, both in Sanskrit and Hindi." Vedic Press, Allahabad.

and efficacy of Yog, of which I have given some account elsewhere,¹ and actually practised Yog for a season in the desert of Chandi.

After many years of vigorous and energetic missionary work, involving much opposition on the part of the orthodox, the Vedic reformer died at Ajmere on the 30th of October, 1883, at the age of fifty-nine, having, according to the accounts of his followers, been poisoned with arsenic by some of the many enemies whom his religious reforms had raised up against him. His end is said to have been edifying. His last word, we are told, was, "Shanti" (God's will be done). Of course the great event had its portentous accompaniments. That was inevitable. The sun grew pale when it knew that Swami-ji was wanted back in the celestial mansions, and shed tears which made themselves manifest in that remarkable fore- and after-glow in the morning and evening sky, which, at that time, attracted attention all the world over. The Earth, as soon as she became aware that Dayanand must return home, heaved a deep sigh, which rent her bosom, and resulted in the terrible and destructive outburst of Krakatoa, together with an earthquake in Greece. And when the fatal moment arrived, Aryavarta trembled to the very Himalayas, while a brilliant meteor flashed across the sky towards the northern pole.²

sp Here we have some natural phenomena, which
ca actually occurred, ingeniously connected with the
lat. Supra.

vigi¹ For the above particulars I am indebted to "The Regenerator of Aryavarta," vol. i. No. 45.

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to put a rationalistic interpretation on the obscure and doubtful passages, and to find a new meaning for such statements or injunctions as seem to conflict with well-established facts and principles. With this method of exegesis and its unhappy results Europe has long been familiar, and the Hindu reformer does not seem to have been more fortunate in its application than Western theologians.

"To him not only was everything contained in the Vedas perfect truth, but he went a step further, and by the most incredible interpretations succeeded in persuading himself and others that everything worth knowing, even the most recent inventions of modern science, were alluded to in the Vedas. Steam-engines, railways, and steam-boats, all were shown to have been known, at least in their germs, to the poets of the Vedas, for Veda, he argued, means divine knowledge, and how could anything have been hid from that?"¹

Three or four years ago, at one of the anniversary meetings of the Society, a member gravely stated that the Vedas mentioned *pure fire*, and as *pure fire* was nothing but electricity, it was evident the Indians of the Vedic period were acquainted with electricity.

Under the guidance of Dayanand, the Aryas, as far as I can ascertain, profess to find pure monotheistic doctrines in the Vedas, and boldly assert that the different nature-gods of the Vedic Aryans, Agni, Vayu, Indra, are but one and the same god. Now the invocations in the *Rig Veda* are addressed to the dawn, to fire, to winds and storms, to Indra the sender of rain, and so on, but there appears to have been no order of precedence in this hierarchy of

¹ Prof. Max Muller's "Biographical Essays—Dayananda Saraswati," p. 170.

celestials, for the language of the hymns attributes supreme power to the god who may be the special subject of invocation and from whom benefits are being craved. As Professor Max Müller observes :

"When these individual gods are invoked they are not conceived as limited by the power of others as superior or inferior in rank. Each god is to the mind of the suppliant as all the gods. He is felt at the time as a real divinity, as supreme and absolute in spite of the necessary limitation which, to our mind, a plurality of gods must entail on every single god. All the rest disappear from the vision of the poet and he only who is to fulfil their desires stands in full light before the eyes of the worshippers."

Beneath these inconsistencies in the Vedic hymns the modern "Aryas" find a pure *monotheism*, where we would be more inclined to discover *pantheism* if anything. But the incongruities noticed above, if not due merely to exaggeration and flattery, may have arisen from the several gods invoked in the Vedic hymns having been peculiar and special *tribal* gods, before the hymns were brought together to form a *national* collection. In contrast with the denial on the part of the modern "Aryas" that the Vedas, when correctly interpreted, lend any countenance to pantheistic theories, is the fact that the founder of the sect himself believed in *yoga-vidya* which surely cannot be reconciled with monotheism as ordinarily understood. The principles of the new sect are stated as follows by themselves in what they are pleased to call their decalogue.

- "1. God is the Fountain of all true knowledge, and the primeval cause of all things knowable.

"II. Worship is alone due to God who is All-truth, All-knowledge, All-beatitude, Boundless, Almighty, Just, Merciful, Un-begotten, Infinite, Unchangeable, without a Beginning, Incomparable, the support and the Lord of all, All pervading, Omniscient, Imperishable, Immortal, Eternal, Holy, and the Cause of the universe.

"III. The Vedas are the Books of true knowledge, and it is the paramount duty of every Arya to read or hear them read ; to teach and preach them to others.

"IV. An Arya should always be ready to accept truth and renounce untruth when discovered

"V. Truth arrived at after consummate deliberation should be his guiding principle in all actions.

"VI. The primary object of the Samaj is to do good to the world by improving the physical, intellectual, spiritual, moral and social condition of mankind.

"VII. Due love for all and appreciation of Justice, an Arya should manifest in his behaviour towards others.

"VIII. He should endeavour to diffuse knowledge and dispel ignorance.

"IX. He should not be content with his own improvement, but look for it in that of others.

"X. In matters which affect the general social well-being of our race he ought to discard all differences and not allow his individuality to interfere, but in strictly personal matters every one may have his own way."

Notwithstanding their decalogue there is still a good deal of uncertainty and vagueness about the tenets of the Arya Samaj, and no doubt this very vagueness helps at present to swell the ranks of its followers. But there are rocks ahead. Dayanand's mantle has not fallen on the shoulders of any one. No successor was appointed by the master, and it is more than probable that the new sect will soon disintegrate into sections, each with its own special and peculiar views. There are some points, however,

regarding which we can speak with tolerable confidence. The members of the Arya Samaj are Hindus inasmuch as they retain and observe those most essential peculiarities of Hinduism, the distinctions of caste and veneration of the cow. They also believe in the transmigration of souls. But they are unorthodox Hindus, inasmuch as they condemn idolatry and reject a large portion of the later scriptures acknowledged as sacred by their co-religionists. They also manifest a strong hostility to the Brahmans; but this, I learn, is more in theory than in practice.

After a long time I was present again, in November, 1886, at a portion of the anniversary celebration of the Arya Samaj. The business extended over two entire days. As on previous occasions the sacrifice known as the *Hom* was duly provided for; also much singing of hymns (partly to the accompaniment of a harmonium), reading of reports and lectures. Of these last one was to be given by a woman. A Hindu woman lecturing in public! This was a real attraction; an opportunity not to be neglected.

The premises of the Samaj I found very much improved, and the place of assembly, although the same, looked very much changed. The area was more restricted, as a part of the open space I had seen before was now built upon, forming a quadrangle, bounded by double-storeyed buildings with picturesque balconies. As on the other occasions, all present, with the exception of myself, were natives. The female lecturer did not give me a chance of writing a description of her charms, for she stood behind a screen, and poured forth, from her place of conceal-

ment, a long discourse in Hindi on women's rights.¹ She began by maintaining the thesis that women were quite as capable of education as men, and, to prove her contention; sent forward a little girl of about six or seven years of age, who recited a long Vedic poem the Mai had taught her. Mai Bhagwati, the lecturer, then proceeded to refer to the admirable manner in which everything in nature was ordered. She drew special attention to the important function of maternity. She told us a story, with the inevitable Rajah in it, to prove or give emphasis to her statement that each one would receive according to his deserts. To the oppression of women in the Zenanas of Hindustan she attributed the subject condition of the country, adding that the blows, ill-treatment, and abuse her countrymen received from the English was the just retribution of their acts in the Zenana. This remark called forth some applause and merriment. Of course Mai Bhagwati's remark was pointed against the unmanly domestic tyranny of her own countrymen, the English being, in her eyes, but the unconscious avengers of the wrongs of the

¹ The *purdah* system amongst Hindus is said to have been adopted during Muhammadan domination. However that may be, the *purdah* is now looked upon as a mark of gentility, and will not easily be lifted, even by the reforming spirit of the age. One might think that the spread of education will soon release women from their present seclusion, but in some cases it produces the very opposite effect. The cheap education now available in most parts of India raises a great many persons out of their natural humble sphere of life. The wives of such men, who once enjoyed the privilege of moving about freely in their own village, are converted into *purdah* *nashceens*, the seclusion of the women being an indication of superior rank.

harem. Following up these remarks, our invisible advocate of women's rights said that the husbands who beat and ill-used their wives here would be born again as dogs to be kicked and beaten in their turn, that those who ensnared women would be fishes who would be duly entangled in the meshes of the fisherman's net, and so on, statements which may, for anything I know to the contrary, rest on Vedic authority, but which were received with incredulous smiles by her male audience.

Later on another lecturer addressed us in Urdu, advocating, in a very excellent speech, the claims to national support of the Anglo-Vedic College proposed to be established in memory of Dayanand, and to such good purpose did he speak, that at the end of his discourse a goodly stream of rupees for the establishment of the college came pouring in. One elderly man advanced to the table, and, divesting himself of his gold bangles, presented them as a contribution to the college. He then, with great deliberation, took off his earrings, one by one, and handed them over also, together with a small sum of money. His action was received with much popular applause, and he was showered with flowers by the sympathetic onlookers. Before retiring, he stipulated that the present he had made should be applied specially towards the building of a room in the boarding-house of the college to be named after his wife. His example stimulated many others to offer their ornaments, and many a ring and silver *Kurra* was handed up, with the name of the donor, amidst the plaudits of the assembly. But one gift more particularly brought the house down—a subscription

sixteen rupees and two annas from the inmates of *Christian Mission* boarding-house.

The influence of the spirit of scientific rationalism, with the diffusion of European education, has in years past been making itself felt throughout India, rendered inevitable the eventual abandonment, reconstruction, or reform of the ancient creeds of the country. That a new and a rationalistic interpretation of the Vedas could be made by a man unacquainted with any European language shows to what a depth below the surface the modern spirit has permeated. The persistent and organized aggressiveness of Christian Missionary effort has so forced the Hindus, particularly the educated and priestly classes, to reconsider the foundations of their faith, while creating a strong feeling of opposition to their well-meant efforts at evangelization. Between the unanswerable truths of science on the one hand, and the uncompromising attitude of condemnation taken up by the Christian missionaries on the other, the leaders of native thought in India felt that something had to be done, and done quickly. The old strongholds had become untenable, the greater portion of the land was nearly defenceless, so the Arya retiring before the enemy and practically surrendering the whole country has taken refuge behind the bulwarks of a little-known and very ancient fortress in the recesses of the mountain.

Viewed broadly, and without a too close reference to its more or less settled tenets and opinions, the Arya movement is an acknowledgment on the part of a section of the Hindu community of the intellectually

unsustainable character of Hinduism; and it is also a patriotic demonstration against Christianity. In this last respect lies its real influence as a factor in the future of native society, but to me it seems to possess too little vitality to make a successful stand against Brahman and Missionary, although I am assured that the enthusiasm at present for the Arya cause is so great that many men give to the Samaj a month's pay every year and others as much as *half their entire salary*. Others, again, put aside, in a separate vessel, a handful of meal out of every supply taken for their daily food, and sell the accumulated store for the benefit of the Samaj at the end of each month. Widows, who have no further need of their jewels, are frequently known to present them to the Samaj.

To a certain extent the Arya sect is in the first of the many stages through which the Brahmo Samaj has passed. It pins its faith upon the Vedas as did the earlier Brahmos; but there is this difference—the Arya has a new interpretation of the Vedas to go upon. It is the Vedas not as usually understood, *but as interpreted by Dayanand*, that he believes in. But this, on the face of it, is not a very stable foundation upon which to rear a new religion. The men who have become the disciples of Dayanand are, with a very few exceptions perhaps, by no means competent to understand or critically appreciate the soundness, or otherwise, of his interpretation of the Vedas. They have been drawn to him, not from a scholarly conviction of his genuine knowledge, but by the personal influence of the man, and by his offering them a rational and *rational*

religion without idolatry. The Arya may think he has found, or may profess to find, in the *Rig* and *Yajur* Vedas a purer and more reasonable faith than that preached by the Christian or Muslim missionaries, but there is strong ground for believing that as long as he clings to any form of Hinduism he will not be able to free himself from the hereditary priesthood who have guided and ruled the social life of India for so many centuries. Although I have taken much trouble to inquire into the matter, I have not been able to find that a single one of the Aryas has dared to openly set at naught the hereditary customs in which the Brahmans play a part, though an attempt has been made to modify some of the ceremonies. For instance, two young men were invested with the sacred thread at Lahore under the auspices of the Arya Samaj. A Brahman pandit was induced to officiate on the occasion, but all rites of an idolatrous character were omitted. The Brahman's fee for the double investiture and the other necessary expenses came up to fifteen rupees, so that the cost to each of the young men was a moiety of that amount. For a long time the two young men in question were objects of ridicule to their orthodox fellows, who proposed, in derision of the irregular ceremony which had been performed with the countenance of the Arya Samaj, to invest any sweeper with the thread on his paying the now recognized fee of seven rupees and eight annas. No doubt reforms are not to be easily carried out in a conservative society like that of the Hindus. Besides, professions and practice are very different things. It is, I understand, a rule of the Arya

Samaj to abandon the custom of early marriages. Yet a prominent member of the sect, a university graduate, and the minister of a foreign state, broke the rule in the case of his own son.

After a careful consideration of the matter, I am inclined to think that the Arya Samaj is at most destined to form one inconsiderable sect amongst the innumerable sects into which Hinduism is divided. But even as a numerically inconsiderable Hindu sect, the Arya Samaj, composed as it is mostly of men who have received an English education, will probably be an important factor in the regeneration of India. The marked leaning of the society towards physical and natural science is a most hopeful augury of its intellectual future, whilst its open abandonment of idolatry and its public profession of monotheism cannot fail to have a healthy influence on religious opinion in India. And although unable as yet to claim any success worth speaking of in the direction of social reforms, the Society, if true to its present principles, may be calculated upon to throw the weight of its influence on the right side when the favourable moment for energetic action shall have arrived. Latterly the Arya Samaj has manifested a growing tendency to take a share in the political agitation which has of recent years been set on foot in India; a fact which, I think, shows that the Society owes its existence quite as much to national as to religious aspirations.

I have, I regret to say, not been able to obtain any reliable statistics regarding the numbers—not very large I believe—formally enrolled in the Arya Samaj; nor do I know of any special work successfully

carried out by the society with the exception of the Anglo-Vedic School recently established at Lahore with some additional college classes, for the preparation of students for the lower examinations of the Punjab University.

V.

THE LAHORE BRAHMO SAMAJ.

ALTHOUGH not unaware of the existence of the new and very aggressive sect of theists known as Brahmas, or Brahmos, nor unacquainted with their generally-accepted doctrines, I had not visited any of their places of worship when the following public notice attracted my attention :

“The sixteenth anniversary of the Punjab Brahmo Samaj will be celebrated on Sunday, the 9th of November, 1879, at the Brahma Mandir, Anarkalli Lahore. The public are cordially invited to attend on the occasion.”

Taking advantage of the Society's invitation to the public generally, I went to their place of worship in time for the morning service.

I found the Brahmo mandir situated in a humble quarter of the town, and devoid of any architectural pretensions whatever. It is a hall about fifty feet long, by eighteen or twenty feet wide, with a veranda in front, partly converted into a little vestry, where Brahmo publications were exposed

for sale. Narrow verandas also shelter the hall on the right and left sides, running along the entire length of the building, which, to suit the climate, is provided with ample means of ventilation.

On the occasion of the anniversary celebration, regarding which I am writing, there were no pictures, statues, or such objects, in the hall. They would have been out of place in the temple of this purely theistic and ostentatiously iconoclastic sect. The occasion was, however, a special one, and some attempt at decoration seemed not only permissible, but called for. Flowers and leaves were innocent enough to be admitted into the precincts of the austere theistic hall, and were used, though not profusely, in giving something of a holiday look to the blank walls of the plain brick building. Between the doorways, on small wooden brackets, were placed glass vases with flowers in them; the doors were ornamented with strings of leaves and flowers. Within the hall, on one side of the entrance doorway, stood an American clock, and on the other a charity-box, labelled in English and, lower down, in Urdu characters.

The floor was carpeted with cotton carpets, known in India as *durrees*. White floor-cloths (not quite clean) were laid for the people to sit upon. A portion of the extreme end of the hall—perhaps a fourth or fifth of the entire room—had been partitioned off by a temporary screen for the accommodation of such women and children as might care to attend. From this extemporized gynecium they could hear, and

Yet, when the service was proceeding, some little children, and a few girls of about ten or eleven years of age, well dressed and well bejewelled, more irrepressible or more curious than the rest, came tripping, with tinkling anklets, into the veranda, to have a few furtive looks through the open doors at what was going on within the hall. With the exception of myself all present were natives.

A little in advance of the temporary screen of the gynecium the Brahmo missionary from Bengal took up his position. There was no pulpit or raised platform of any kind for the preacher. The Eastern does not like to stand, and our Brahmo missionary from Bengal was no exception to the general rule, for he sat squat on the floor, the place immediately in front of him being walled in by flower-pots and strewn with flowers. Here he prayed and preached and sang in turns, seated the whole while, and with his eyes shut: The hymns for the day were taken from a small vernacular hymn-book of only a few printed pages. The choir-singers and musicians were the same three Muhammadans I had seen at the Arya Samaj;¹ but the congregation in the Brahmo mandir seemed to take part in the singing to a greater extent than did the congregation at the Arya meeting. Several persons present joined in the hymns, swaying their bodies about gently to the measure. There were prayers, long ones too, in which the congregation took part in a devout manner.

In his prayers the Brahmo missionary asked that Brahma would cause the Hindus, Muhammadans,

¹ *Supra* p. 98.

and Christians to turn to him and become Brahmos. I could not help thinking that much of the forms of the prayers, or rather the style of the expressions used, were copied, consciously or unconsciously, from the prayer-book of the Church of England.

During his lecture the missionary, to give point to his speech, quoted an episode from the Ramayana about "Seta Dabi" and "Hanooman Sahib," in which the poet says that the monkey-god destroyed a certain city because he could not find the name of God there. At one stage of the proceedings, while a hymn was being sung, two or three men got up and went about placing garlands of flowers round the necks of the people present.

As far as I could judge, the congregation was drawn from the ranks of the well-to-do middle class of the native society of Lahore. The upper classes sent no representatives, nor did the labourers and artizans. Several Bengalis were present. The entire congregation, excluding the women and children behind the curtain, did not, on the sixteenth anniversary of the Punjab Brahmo Samaj, exceed fifty souls, and of these several had been present at, and taken part in, the Arya celebration described in a previous paper—a fact which, I take it, is a fair indication of the absence at that time of narrow sectarian feeling in both movements. At the door I purchased some Brahmo publications, and then left the hall, carrying away with me the impression that the Brahmo theistic church, which originated in Bengal, had certainly not met with much success in the Punjab.

a subsequent occasion I was present at an interesting ceremony which took place in the Lahore mandir. Public notice of the event was in the following terms :

"I have been requested to inform the public that Pandit who is a minister of the Punjab Brahmo Samaj, has decided to enter the Sanyasa Ashrama, i.e., to renounce his secular life, on the 20th instant, it being the 32nd anniversary birthday. The ceremony of his initiation into the new life will be performed in the hall of the Brahmo Samaj on that day, at 6.30 p.m. The public are cordially invited to witness the ceremony."

The public, at any rate the native public (for Europeans in India care for none of these things), received the invitation as cordially as it was given, and hundreds thronged the Brahmo mandir long before the appointed hour. Through the courtesy of a member of the Samaj a chair was placed for me close to the raised platform, surrounded with garlands and flowers, on which the officiating minister was to take his seat for the purpose of conducting the ceremony of initiation. The man who had decided to renounce his secular life was a married man with three children, and held a good appointment on a salary of a hundred and fifty rupees a month. He had deliberately resigned his post in order to lead a religious life, and the probable fate of his wife and family was a matter of speculation among the natives present that evening.

The proceedings, which were throughout conducted with great solemnity, were carried out in accordance with a programme of the evening's work;

copies of which were distributed amongst the audience.

The candidate, with head and face shaved quite smooth, appeared before the audience, well-clad in garments dyed of the orange-yellow colour affected by ascetics in India. The officiating minister, a native gentleman of good standing, engaged for the most part in the secular work of vernacular education, wore his ordinary dress, but had, in honour of the occasion, thrown an orange-coloured sheet over his shoulders. After the preliminary divine service, the minister gave the candidate a new name, by which he was to be known henceforth, and read out various precepts, culled from the Hindu Shastras, in regard to a virtuous life. He whispered into the ear of the new ascetic the "sacred watchword," and then addressed him at great length upon the responsibilities which his new life imposed upon him.

action had at length come. In anxious and earnest prayer and communion with the All-father had been passed the night preceding the day on which the final step had been taken. Many conflicting feelings had contended for mastery in the speaker's breast. Sore had been the temptation of the world's emoluments and pleasures. Suggestions of the comfort, enjoyment and consideration to be derived from his regular and not inconsiderable earnings stole into his mind, in seductive whispers, but the thought of what Gautama, the Buddha, had voluntarily renounced—his princely rank, his lovely wife, his child but a day old—brought forcibly before the troubled mind of the doubter that, in his case, the sacrifice would, by comparison, be inconsiderable indeed. That reflection had determined his present action, and as for the future he left that to God. But though now a sannyasi and a beggar in the sight of men, he had no intention of abandoning his faithful wife and his little children; and it would be his care to provide for them in the years that were to come. This last statement was received with prolonged applause by the audience. Turning away


was similarly questioned with respect to the young man, and gave a suitable response. The minister then addressed the young couple on the duties and responsibilities of married life, and made each one repeat after him a formula, much resembling that in the prayer-book of the Church of England (and probably adopted from it), which begins with the words, "I take thee, C. D., to be my wedded wife," &c., &c.

When these formal and necessary declarations had been made and obligations accepted, the minister joined the hands of the young couple and tied them together with a string of flowers. At this point the musicians set up an appropriate hymn, and, while the music continued, the young couple sat silently joined together by the floral chain.

The minister then addressed the married couple and the audience at great length. He dwelt upon the many disadvantages and evils of child-marriage, and commended, in glowing terms, the courage of

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The minister then addressed the married couple and the audience at great length. He dwelt upon the many disadvantages and evils of child-marriage, and commended, in glowing terms, the courage of the bride's father, who, in defiance of custom and public opinion, had, from a sense of duty, educated his girl with the care only given in ordinary cases to the education of a boy, and had not sought a husband for her till she had attained the age of *fifteen*, and was sufficiently instructed to take upon herself the responsibilities of a married life. The minister condemned very forcibly the existing Hindu system of child-marriage, which led inevitably to the shipwreck of so many lives, and he exhorted his hearers to come forward manfully and assist, by example, the reform to which so many were ready to give their approval, but which so few were willing to

carry out their representatives of the irresistible in the Sarkar, brought us safely, and in a very few minutes, to the desired goal. With loud shouts, vigorous pushes to right and left, and, it must be confessed, free use of their official batons on the turbaned heads of their unoffending countrymen, the policemen cleared the way for us, without, as far as I could observe, creating the smallest outward sign of irritation in the men so unceremoniously handled. Possibly the stolid countenances of the Sikhs masked the resentment which such treatment would only too naturally awaken. I tried, but unsuccessfully, to restrain the superabundant energy of our guides and protectors. They were apparently acting according to their ordinary procedure, and smilingly protested that no harm was being done.

When we reached the door of the shrine, it was thronged by a crowd of eager visitors. On the pavement, damp and dirty from the feet of the multitudes that had already been there, devout pilgrims were prostrating themselves with touching humility; whilst others were silently, and very undemonstratively, struggling to enter the holy place, in order to present the offerings, rich or trifling, which they had brought in their hands.

We entered the inner room or sanctuary, a vaulted chamber of very moderate dimensions, with a richly ornamented ceiling. In the centre of it was a heavy canopy or baldachin of cloth of gold, supported on four silver posts. Under this was the sacred book of the Sikhs, the *Adi-Granth*, covered over with costly brocade, and before the volume, facing the main entrance, sat the chief priest of the temple.

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The *cheraghs* were being arranged as closely as possible, along all the principal lines of the architecture. On the roof itself, these little lamps were screened on the outer side by a row of thin glass flasks containing water, variously coloured to produce the effect of polychromatic lights, and well indeed, as we afterwards saw, was the desired result secured by this very simple device.

The return through the closely packed crowd was only a repetition of our progress to the temple, and was accomplished without any *contretemps*. Near the clock-tower we found that the authorities (municipal or other) had placed several rows of seats for European spectators of the illumination. Here we settled ourselves down to watch the gradual lighting up of the temple and its surroundings. In an open space just behind us, a band of musicians—the town-band, I suppose—were treating us to popular English airs. As the dusk of evening approached, the appearance in quick succession, on different parts of the temple, around the boundaries of the tank and on the adjacent buildings, of bright points of fire, each point faithfully reproduced in the bosom of the tranquil lake, told us that the *cheraghs* were being deftly lighted by many practised hands. Silently and rapidly line after line of fire flashed into existence, revealing to our admiring eyes the gemmed outlines of a veritable fairy city. When the buildings had all been lighted up, we were treated to a brilliant display of fireworks on three sides of the tank, the effect of the whole, as a display of light and colour, being most striking and admirable. But, for my part, I would willingly have dispensed with both

the English band and the pyrotechnics, for they seemed to me out of keeping with the place and the occasion.

One consequence of the fireworks was to set in wild confused flight over our heads a host of pigeons, birds held sacred in so many religious cities, and not less sacred at Amritsar, where it would be dangerous for any one to kill a pigeon near the Golden Temple.

Unfortunately illuminations and fireworks are not free from smoke. We were soon glad to leave the heavy air in the neighbourhood of the temple, and take our way back through the now brilliantly lighted streets of Amritsar. The Diwali festival, in honour of which the temple and the city were illuminated, is known in Bengal as the Kali Poojah, and in that province is attended with the sacrifice of countless victims, particularly sheep, goats, and buffaloes.¹ In the North-Western Provinces of India and in the Punjab, the Diwali day is that on which the Hindu tradesmen open their account-books for the new year and indulge largely in gambling as an omen of the luck they are to have during the ensuing twelve months. *Lakshmi*, the goddess of fortune, is on this night worshipped in the form of a current gold or silver coin. The dwelling-houses are all thoroughly cleaned and set in order, if only on this one occasion in the year, to be fit places for the reception of the goddess; while the illumination is to keep devils from entering the houses under cover of the dark-

¹ "The Hindoos as They Are," by Sahib Chunder Bose, p. 135 et seq.

anniversary day of her death by sacrificing a cock on her tomb, after the Pagan manner; this was and is the common report, and I have been credibly informed, both by Christians and Pagans, who lived at Calcutta under his agency, that the story was really true matter of fact."

In regard to the sati of the wives of Runjeet Singh we have ample details. After the Ranees—unveiled to the public eye for the first time in their lives, and on foot, but accompanied by their attendants—had distributed their jewels amongst certain of the bystanders, the funeral procession was arranged, and proceeded slowly towards the pyre already erected for the dreadful ceremony. Heading the procession came the corpse of the deceased Maharajah, borne on a bier made in the form of a ship, with sails and flags of cloth of gold, and the costly shawls of Kashmir. Next came the Ranees, habited in simple silk attire, without any ornaments about their persons, carried in open palanquins, offering to the onlookers an example of quiet dignity and heroic self-sacrifice. Immediately behind the Ranees walked seven barefooted slave-girls, some of them not more than fourteen or fifteen years of age, whom superstition, and perhaps unlawful threats, had driven to sacrifice their young lives in the cruel flames, to add to the pomp of the deceased king's funeral. Arrived at the pyre, the Maharajah's bier was divested of its costly ornaments, which were then given away. The drums kept up a low solemn rumbling. The funeral ceremonies for the dead were performed by Brahmans, as well as by Sikh Gurus, while the Muhammadans,

¹ Captain Hamilton, quoted in Wheeler's "Early Records of British-India," pp. 189, 190.

not to be behind the others in testifying their respect for the departed Maha.ajah, broke in frequently with "Ya-Allah." When the appropriate rites, which occupied nearly an hour, were completed, the corpse was respectfully deposited, by the grandees of the court, on the top of the funeral pile, built of dry wood strewn over with cotton seeds. The Ranees, one by one, taking precedence according to rank, ascended the ladder to the top of the pile, and seated themselves at the head of the corpse. The slave-girls then mounted and took up their position at the feet of the royal body. As they sat there awaiting their now inevitable doom, "a strong thick mat of reeds," was brought and put over them, and probably secured. They had looked their last on earth! To add to the combustibility of the mat it was saturated with oil. All the needful preparations being now completed, the sirdars and attendants descended from the pile, which was then lighted at the four corners. In a few minutes eleven human victims perished in the smoke and flames; but the pyre took two days to be entirely consumed.¹ From its ashes a few human bones and relics were carefully and privately gathered. These, after being placed in separate mortuary urns, were conveyed in great state to the banks of the Ganges and committed to the waters of the sacred river. The remains of Runjeet Singh and the four Ranees were carried away from Lahore in five palanquins, with all the pomp and attention the deceased were accustomed to in their lifetime. The

¹ That sati was not exactly a compulsory ceremony is evident from the fact that some forty of the Ranees of Runjeet Singh survived him, of whom three were living in 1882.

palanquin which contained the ashes of the Maharajah had its screens drawn back, while the others were closely curtained as though their modest occupants still shunned the public gaze. Tents of Kashmir shawls, with poles overlaid with silver and gold, were provided for the march, and these, with innumerable costly presents, were given away to the attendant Brahmins at the place where the remains of the chief and his consorts were finally entrusted to the sacred river.¹ Regarding such remains of the slave-girls as the fire may have left, the chronicler says nothing, so we may presume that they were neglected as unworthy of any special attention. On the spot where the sati was performed, now stands the Samadh of Maharajah Runjeet Singh.

For a people who believe in the transmigration of souls, and who practise cremation of the dead, monuments such as this can have but little significance; and indeed in their erection the Hindus merely followed the fashion of the Muhammadans, whose imposing and costly tombs formed so important a feature in the architectural works of the Muslim conquerors of India.

The rite of sati was once practised in nearly every part of India on the authority of certain texts and injunctions in the sacred books of the Hindus, from the Rig Veda downwards.² Some authorities, however, maintain that the Vedas do not sanction

¹ The above details have been taken from the narrative of an eye witness, Dr. J. M. Honigberger, who was "Physician to the Court of Lahore." See his "Thirty-three Years in the East." H. Baillière, 219, Regent Street, London, 1852.

² Colebrooke's "Essays," vol. i. p. 135.

the rite of widow-burning, but rather the reverse. Indeed, Professor Max Muller affirms that the particular text of the Rig Veda usually cited in support of sati was deliberately falsified by the unscrupulous Brahmans.¹

At what precise period the rite of sati became general in India, history does not inform us. We know it was practised to some extent at the time of Alexander's invasion of India in the fourth century before the Christian era, and it is alluded to in the Ramayana and Mahabharata.² The causes which probably helped to encourage and perpetuate this cruel custom are well and briefly stated by Sir A. C. Lyall in the following words :

"Perhaps the best example of a selfish device obtaining vogue under the cloak of a necessary rite is afforded by the famous practice of a widow becoming *Sati*, or burning herself alive with her dead husband, which is undoubtedly, as Sir H. Maine has pointed out, connected with the desire to get rid of her right, if she is childless, to a tenancy for life upon her husband's lands. It is also connected, among the great families, as may be easily observed still in certain parts of India, with the wish of an heir to free himself by this simple plan from many inconveniences and encumbrances entailed upon him by the bequest of a number of stepmothers, who cannot marry again.³

Polygamy may also, as Dr. Marshman believed, have contributed in another way to encourage sati, through the jealousy of the old husbands of young wives, who, clinging to their exclusive possession even in death, would leave instructions with their

¹ Prof. Max Muller's "Selected Essays," vol. i. pp. 333-336.

² Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra's, "Indo-Aryans," vol. ii. p. 137.

³ "Asiatic Studies," by Sir Alfred Lyall, p. 56.

heirs to use every possible means to accomplish the desired sacrifice.* But the origin of the custom must be looked for deeper and further back. From the very earliest ages down to our own times it has been the practice amongst many barbarous peoples, who believe in the existence of the soul after death, to kill the wives and favourite slaves of a king, chief, or other person on the occasion of his funeral obsequies, in order that they might attend the deceased and minister to his wants in the shadow-land beyond the grave. The practice is still in full force and carried to terrible excess amongst many African tribes. It was at one time very widely spread, but came in many countries to be gradually replaced by ceremonies derived from the original observances, but not involving loss of life. For instance, the widow would be laid upon the pyre, but removed before the flames actually reached her; or images representing wives and slaves would be consumed with the corpse. There would appear to be some ground for concluding that in the Vedic age in India the practice of widow-burning had gone somewhat out of fashion, though, perhaps, never quite given up, and that modified ceremonies like those to which reference has just been made were coming into favour. The subsequent revival, under Brahmanical influences, of widow-burning, and its continuance to our own day, may be largely due to the causes pointed out by Sir Henry Maine. Of course, the degradation of the widow who chose to survive her husband would be a necessary complement to sati.

* Bishop Heber's narrative of a journey through the Upper Provinces of India, 1824-25.

Make the position of the widow intolerable, and sati would be chosen by every high-spirited woman as the lesser of two evils. To the affectionate wife and to the timid soul, the priest offered reunion with the dead and long ages of happiness in the celestial mansions, thereby throwing the halo of religious sanctions over a horrid and revolting custom. Indeed, sati would seem to be a survival of a very ancient rite, fostered and maintained for selfish ends. Unfortunately, the women of India have not only suffered in person by the cruel rite of sati, but have had a slur—no doubt an unmerited one—cast upon them by historians seeking to account for the origin of the hideous custom. Strabo¹ tells us, and several travellers have repeated the same story,² that sati was introduced by law in order to put a stop to the widespread crime of husband-poisoning, to which Indian wives who fell in love with young men were said to be particularly given.

I am not aware that any one of the many religious reformers who have appeared from time to time in India, loudly preaching theological doctrines more or less heterodox, made any effort whatever to suppress, or even to discourage, the inhuman rite of sati. It is true the author of the *Dabistan* (A.D. 1615-1670) observes that—

“The enlightened doctors say that by a woman’s becoming suttee is meant that on her husband’s decease she should con-

¹ Strabo, bk. xv. chap. 30. The great geographer himself doubts the existence of the law, and, necessarily, of the reason assigned for its enactment.

² For instances, see Dr. Norman Chever’s “*Indian Medical Jurisprudence*,” p. 104.

sume in the fire along with him all her desires, and thus die before the period assigned by nature ; as in metaphysical language woman signifies 'passion' ; or in other words she is to cast all her passions into the fire ; but not throw herself into it along with the deceased, which is far from being praiseworthy."¹

Probably Muslim influences and feelings opposed to sati were finding expression in the doctrines thus referred to by Moshan Fani ; but it remained for foreign rulers, unhampered by unhealthy Brahmanical traditions, to discountenance and eventually abolish the barbarous practice. The Emperor Akbar, we learn from Abu-l-Fazl, appointed inspectors to prevent women being forcibly burnt with their dead husbands and, on one occasion he mounted his horse and rode at full speed to prevent, in person, an unwilling woman being sacrificed on the pyre to the unnatural bigotry of her son.² But whatever the Mogul rulers may have done towards mitigating the horrible custom, the credit of abolishing it belongs to the English.

In 1824-25, Bishop Heber, travelling through the Upper Provinces of India, learnt from Dr. Marshman that satis had latterly become more frequent in Bengal, and that the famous missionary attributed this unhappy fact to the increasing luxury of the upper and middle classes, and their expensive imitation of European habits, which often so narrowed their means as to make them anxious to be freed from the necessity of supporting their widowed relations. If the presence of the European in India

¹ "Dabistan," translated by Shea and Troyer, vol. ii. p. 77.

² "Akbar nama of Abu-l-Fazl," Elliot's "Muhammadan Historians of India," by Dowson, vol. vi. pp. 68, 69.

tended, however indirectly, to increase the sacrifice of Hindu widows, it is satisfactory to know that, within five years of the Bishop's tour, vigorous preventive measures were adopted by Lord William Bentinck, who, as Governor-General of India, passed a law in 1829 under which any one who abetted the act of sati would be considered guilty of culpable homicide. The effect of this regulation has been the almost complete suppression of sati throughout the British possessions in India, though it still prevails in the Independent Hill States on the borders of British territory, and occurs occasionally in the countries ruled by feudatory princes. As recently as 1883 a sati was performed at Utna, in Rajputana, within five miles of a British cantonment, but the abettors of the crime were severely punished by the Jeypore Durbar, probably at the instance of the Governor-General's agent.

A few generations hence, the crime which had been countenanced and encouraged in India for more than twenty centuries will be extinct, and probably as revolting to the feelings of the people as to those of their foreign rulers, affording an apt illustration of the mode in which legislation may contribute to form the manners, the morals, and the character of a people.

elephant through the world," and would "be the emperor over all the kings." ¹ I well remember with what excited eagerness I was cross-questioned about the Maharajah and his movements, when I went one morning to visit the tomb of the Sikh Guru Arjan Singh, hard by the fort of Lahore.

As a matter of fact, Dhuleep Singh, instead of being made ruler of Kashmir by the British Government, was, on account of certain grave indiscretions on his part, not even allowed to land in India, and at the present time is, in his own words, "England's implacable enemy," somewhere on the continent of Europe, most probably in Russia.

As a relic of the troubled times which preceded the British conquest of India, a belief lingers about the bazaars of Upper India that Delhi is fated to be "looted" every hundred years, Lahore every fifty years, and Multan every thirty years. Regardless of history and chronology, the people are persuaded that the destined period has arrived for all three cities; and the Punjabi mind, I am told, is, or was recently, on the tip-toe of expectation, watching with anxiety for the inevitable bloodshed and disorder.

In war time the *bazaar gup* in an Indian town is especially interesting and significant. At such a time rumours of reverses or disasters are always in the air, are eagerly listened to, and perhaps maliciously kept afloat. Let me give one instance out of any number that might be cited. During the Afghan war of 1878-1880 we had, for a few days, no news of General Roberts and the forces immediately under

¹ "The Sakhee Book," translated by Sirdar Attar Singh, Chief of Bhadoor, pp. 35-37.

his command. The bazaar was, as usual on such occasions, teeming with the most circumstantial accounts of what was going on at the front. The gallant General had been murdered near Cabul, and his little army totally destroyed by the tribesmen. Such was the story that found ready acceptance in the market-place, while in reality the General was making a quiet and completely successful entry into the Afghan capital, in company with Yakub Khan.

Sir John Kaye has dealt with this subject of bazaar news in a spirit of something like poetical exaggeration, which the real circumstances of the case by no means justify. This historian says :

“It is a fact that there is a certain description of news, which travels in India, from one station to another, with a rapidity almost electric. Before the days of the ‘lightning post’ there was sometimes intelligence in the bazaars of the native dealers and the lines of the native soldiers, especially if the news imported something disastrous to the British, days before it reached, in any official shape, the high functionaries of government. We cannot trace the progress of these evil tidings. The natives of India have an expressive saying that ‘it is in the air.’ It often happened that an uneasy feeling—an impression that something had happened, though they ‘could not discern the shape thereof’—pervaded men’s minds, in obscure anticipation of the news that was travelling towards them in all its tangible proportions. All along the line of road, from town to town, from village to village, were thousands to whom the fact of those who brought the glad tidings were beautiful and welcome. The British magistrate returning from his evening ride, was perhaps met on the road near the bazaar by a venerable native on an ambling pony—a native respectable of aspect, with white beard and whiter garments, who salaamed to the English gentleman as he passed, and went on his way freighted with intelligence refreshing to the souls of those to whom it was communicated, to be used with judgment and sent on with

despatch. This was but one of many costumes worn by the messenger of evil. In whatever shape he passed, there was nothing outwardly to distinguish him. Next morning there was a sensation in the bazaar, and a vague excitement in the Sepoy lines. But when rumours of disaster reached the houses of the chief English officers, they were commonly discredited. Their own letters were silent on the subject. It was not likely to be true, they said, as they had heard nothing about it. But it was true, and the news had travelled another hundred miles whilst the white gentlemen, with bland scepticism, were shaking their heads over the lies of the bazaar."¹

- * It seems a pity to pry too closely into this mysterious system of disseminating intelligence, which, some would actually have us believe, was carried on by the imaginary mahatmas of the Himalayas "by their own methods,"² that is, if I am not mistaken, along strange magnetic currents in the atmosphere; but as the circumstance dealt with by Sir John Kaye is often referred to in India as something more or less inexplicable, and as the plain matter-of-fact explanation of the whole thing is so obvious, I cannot refrain from pausing a moment to consider it here.

In the time of the terrible Indian mutiny and rebellion to which Sir John Kaye's remarks apply, disaster followed disaster, and the predictions or guesses of the bazaar, *always hostile to the British*, were unfortunately too often verified; but, the circumstances of the case being considered, there was surely nothing strange or mysterious in this. When a rising at any station was pre-arranged to take place on a certain date, it was obviously quite

¹ Kaye's "Sepoy War," vol. i. pp. 491, 492.

² Sinnett's "Occult World," p. 21, foot-note.

possible for any one in the secret to travel to a distance and declare on the appointed day, and even at the appointed hour, that a mutiny had broken out at such a station, and that the Europeans there had all been massacred ; for indeed they had little chance of escape. There was nothing particularly mysterious in all this. If the rumours of the town did not tally with the facts as they were eventually known, the false reports were at once forgotten. Had the rumours current in Lahore, about the disaster said to have befallen Sir Frederick Roberts at Cabul, been to any degree borne out by events, we may imagine what an effect the coincidence would have produced, and how much some people would be disposed to make out of it. As it was, the events gave the lie to the rumour, and it at once dropped out of men's minds. Indeed, mendacious stories of disaster to the British arms have been current in the bazaars whenever our forces have been engaged in a war beyond our own borders, and Sir John Kaye has himself given several instances of such false rumours of reverses.*

How news is *manufactured* in the East we may learn from a Muhammadan historian.

"When the besieged were thus reduced," says Zian-d din Barni, "to extremities, and were suing for peace, very nearly a month had passed since any couriers had arrived from the Sultan, although the Khan had previously received two or three letters every week. This want of intelligence from the court caused some uneasiness in the minds of the Khan and his officers ; they imagined that some of the posts on the road had been destroyed, and that consequently the couriers had been

* Kaye's "Sepoy War," vol. i. pp. 35, 266, and 483.

unable to prosecute their journeys with the news. It also caused apprehension and misgivings to spread among the troops, and stories were carried from one to another. Ubaid the poet, and Shaikh Zada-i Dimashki, two evil-disposed and turbulent fellows, who by some means had been introduced to the Khan, fanned the strife, and spread false reports among the soldiers to the effect that the Sultan was dead, that the government had been overthrown, that a new prince now sat upon the throne of Delhi, and that the way was quite closed against all couriers and messengers. So every man took his own course. These two malicious men trumped up another false story. They went to Malik Tamar, Malik Tigin, Malik Mall Afghan, and Malik Kafur, keeper of the seal, and told these nobles that Ulugh Khan looked upon them with envy and suspicion, as generals and nobles of the reign of Alan-d din, and as obstacles to his attaining the throne; that their names were written down in a list as men to be disposed of, and that they would be all seized at once and beheaded. These nobles were aware that these two treacherous men were constantly about Ulugh Khan, and so they credited their statements. They therefore agreed to take flight, and joining together their followers they left the camp. Through this defection a panic fell upon the army, trouble and tumult arose, and no man thought of another. This event was very opportune for the besieged Hindus, and saved them. They sallied forth and plundered the baggage of the army, and Ulugh Khan, with his immediate followers, retreated to Deogir. The soldiers were worn out, and fell in all directions. As they retreated, couriers arrived from the court, bringing news of the health and safety of the Sultan."

It is unnecessary to remark that the rumour set on foot by the conspirators might have turned out to be true, as indeed it did in the following case :

"While the Emperor was on this campaign against Khan-Zainun, the author's father remained at Agra, in the per-

' From the "*Tarikh-i Feroz Shahi*" of Zian-d din Barni. Elliot's "*Muhammadan Historians of India*," vol. iii. pp. 231, 232.

formance of his duty to the Emperor, and the author himself was at Agra with him. Every day turbulent and designing men spread disastrous news. One day I said to one of my companions, 'Suppose we set some favourable reports afloat ;' and he asked what we should say, and I replied, 'Let us say that news has come that they are bringing in the heads of Khán Zaman and Bahádur Khan.' I told this story to several persons. Three days afterwards, Abdullah, son of Muíad Beg, brought in the heads of Khán Zaman and Bahádur Khan. The rumour was started in Agra on the very day they were slain."

There are some, I am quite aware, who regard the rumours of disaster which fill the bazaars in time of war as indications of the hostile feelings of the people towards their foreign rulers. I myself attach no such importance to the matter. The vast majority of the people know nothing and care nothing about political or military matters. The picture sometimes drawn of the two hundred and fifty millions of our Indian fellow-subjects, or even of the forty millions of Indian Muhammadans, watching the political horizon with keen and intelligent interest, is superlatively ridiculous. During that critical period, the early part of 1885, I often asked English-speaking natives about the news, and found that they were as ignorant and indifferent about it as if they had been dwellers in the Fiji Islands. The totally uneducated are, if possible, even more indifferent. The gossip in war time comes from the camp and camp-followers, and the rumours of disaster are circulated in the towns by a few malicious persons. Sometimes the bazaar gup originates with dishonest speculators, who hope to profit by a panic ; but is perhaps more frequently

set afloat by wags and foolish fellows who wish to get up a little excitement. At the same time it is not to be denied that there are in the English press itself elements sufficient to unsettle the minds of the Indian people. For how is it possible that the masses of the large towns in India should learn with indifference, through the distorting medium of the vernacular press, the complaints constantly made in England, for party purposes, of the naval and military weakness of the country, of the utterly unprotected state of the British Isles, and of the vast superiority of foreign nations in men and weapons?

I have, perhaps, said enough in this paper to indicate the nature of the rumours which, originating in various ways and circulated for various purposes, float about the Indian bazaars in ordinary times as well as on special occasions. That such false rumours, however baseless and absurd, might at a critical moment be productive of grave consequences to the state, no one will question. There is, however, but one remedy—*education*. Much has already been done by schools, colleges, and universities, but a great deal yet remains to be done to enlighten the masses—not the country folks only, but the urban populations as well.

X.

*AT THE PLAY: THE NEW INDIAN
THEATRE.*

THERE is perhaps less difference between London and Lahore than there is between a play like "Pleasure," at Drury Lane, and one like "Indur Sabbha" on a Hindu stage in Anarkali.

The performances, interesting from many points of view, which I am about to describe, took place in mere temporary sheds, simply because there were no permanent theatres or better accommodation for such theatrical representations existing in the capital of the Punjab, or, as far as I know, anywhere in Northern India. At Calcutta, I understand, the Bengalees have got two or three theatres of their own, but I regret to say I have as yet had no opportunity of visiting them. However, I have before me a copy of a play-bill of one of the Bengalee theatres, which may be found interesting to the reader. Its moral tone is not the least remarkable part of this play-bill, which I reproduce below exactly as it appeared in a Lahore newspaper. There are, unfortunately, some obvious misprints in it, but I have not ventured to make any alterations.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, 28TH AND 29TH MAY.
NATIONAL THEATRE, 6, BEADON STREET.

Saturday the 28th May, 1881.

At 9 P.M. will be repeated with necessary improvements and additional grandeur, that new and original historical drama by Babu Grish Chunder Ghosh

ANUNDO ROHO, OR AKBAR.

This new drama is no stale story told in dull monotonous dialogue, nor is the work crammed with tremendous tiring octavo speeches and soliloquies. The greatest statesman and mightiest monarch Akbar is portrayed with a truly histrionic pen.

The dying speech of Rana Pratap will bring tears from every human eye!

The scene where Akbar suffers from the effects of poison, falling a victim to his own malicious machinations, that monarch of monarchs whose single breath could one day change the fortune of this vast Indian Empire suffering all the untold tortures of hell in his secluded pavilion in the centre of a tank, and now so poor as to console his burning soul or pour a drop of water on his scalded tongue, this awfully grand scene we say will have an impression in the mind of the spectators never to be effaced, and impart a lesson illustrative of the Truth, that the crooked path of *policy* is always perilous!


BLIND.—A quite original and strictly national character, sublime and magnanimous, will be played by Babu Grish Chunder Ghosh.

Soul dissolving songs—where religion and love are harmoniously blended together—will even for the instant inspire confidence and love for Good in the heart of the most ungodly!

SCENES.—As for our scenic grandeur, we need only say “Come and see!”

NEXT DAY, SUNDAY, AT 6 P.M., THAT SPARKLING
MELODRAMA,
MAGIC STATUE.

All the local papers have spoken very highly of this piece, both as a practical production and stage play.

 *Please note.*—This is that well received play in the *finale* of which marble statues are transformed into living beauties.

G. C. GHOSH,
Manager.

On the 3rd of March, 1883, I went, accompanied by a friend, to witness the performance of "Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp," in the temporary theatre erected not far from the Mayo Hospital at Lahore, by a Parsee dramatic company. The theatre was a huge shed, very dimly lighted by a single chandelier of only four lamps, suspended in the centre of the room, and a couple of wall-lamps with reflectors fixed against side-posts. These six lamps, with the row of foot-lights on the stage, constituted the entire lighting arrangements of the theatre, and, as might be readily imagined, every part of this big shed, with the exception of the stage, was in semi-darkness. When my friend and I arrived, about twenty minutes before the time appointed for the commencement of the play, the place was already thronged with an audience representing all ranks of the native community except the highest. There were also present, occupying for the most part the front rows, a small number of Europeans and Eurasians of the lower classes, including a sprinkling of respectable representatives of the gentler sex, some of them in demi-toilette and evidently dressed for the occasion.

The stage, as we soon had an opportunity of learning, was got up after the European model, and was provided with an abundance of trap-doors and lifts, so necessary for the sudden appearance and disappearance of the genii who figure in the story of Aladdin.

The piece was performed in the Urdu language, and the whole of it, with trifling exceptions, was sung to the accompaniment of a *sarungee* and a drum. I had not been prepared for this musical performance, and found it rather more difficult to follow the

words as they reached us not a little disguised by their passage through the nasal organs of the performers.

The troupe consisted of ten Parsee men and one young European woman, whom a strange fate had brought into association with this roving company of men of an entirely alien race and creed.

The curtain rose to discover a black, thickly bearded, well-featured man standing at a small table, with alembics and crucibles in the background, engaged in some magic rites. In his hand he held an hour-glass. This was the famous magician of the story. After consulting the hour-glass attentively once or twice, he fired a pistol below the table, and immediately up rose a fairy, from whom, after a short colloquy, he received a ring. The fairy then vanished as suddenly as she had appeared. Rubbing the ring and again discharging the pistol brought up, this time, the venerable king of the genii, from whom the magician learned particulars as to how possession of the wonderful lamp might be secured.

During these proceedings, there lay unnoticed a dark figure prostrate on the floor. A kick from the magician brought the sleeper to his feet in apparent confusion, and introduced to the audience a dumb half-witted Abyssinian slave, who henceforward played a part, more or less irrelevant and absurd, in every succeeding scene.

This character has, as far as I remember, no warrant whatever in the "Arabian Nights." It is apparently introduced as a concession to the rules of the modern Indian theatre, which, "like the ancient, has its *bidushaka* or privileged buffoon, the companion of

As I mentioned before, there was but one woman in the troupe, and she a European. Women never appear now on the regular stage in India, and only, as far as I know, take part in the *panchaly* performances in the Bengal zenanas. Nor need we be surprised at this, when we recollect that it was not until the Restoration that females appeared on the boards of an English theatre. But I should add that, according to Professor H. H. Wilson, female characters were generally represented on the old Hindu stage by females, although it was not uncommon for men or lads to personate females in certain cases. No native women were, as far as I could see, present at the performance of *Aladdin*; not even *hetaræ*, who, it is certain, frequented the Greek theatre, from which respectable females were excluded.

Very different from *Aladdin*, and performed by an entirely different company, was the play I now proceed to describe, a very popular modern drama, "*Indur Sabha*," composed, it is said, by a Mussulman poet, by command of Wajid Ali Shah, ex-king of Oudh.

The theatre was a huge framework of bamboos, badly put together and covered with thin sheeting. The stage was good enough, and was lighted by some fifteen lamps with reflectors. There were no other lamps in the big enclosure, but a tropical moon shining through the ceiling-cloth gave a subdued light which was far from disagreeable. The reserved seats consisted of a double row of chairs, the first class of a similar double row a little further back; then came a barrier, and behind it a rude arrangement of seats for the bulk of the

spectators. The charges for seats varied from three rupees to four annas each, and there was a special place reserved, at eight annas a seat, for "native females"; but I did not see any there, or anywhere else in the theatre. The performance was advertised to commence at nine. At about two minutes to that hour, I took my seat in what appeared an almost empty house. A quarter of an hour went by; I ventured to inquire of an attendant connected with the theatre when the performance commenced. "At nine," he said, but added significantly, "You see they don't come till late"—referring, as I understood, to the audience. "And so you wait for them?" I observed. "Yes," he replied, "we *must* wait for them." Twenty minutes past nine, the half-past nine gun, and no sign of business nor the slightest indication of impatience on the part of the audience, which had now increased considerably. This, at any rate, gave me time to study my company. In the first row of all, and just before me, was a young Eurasian woman in a yellow satin dress, evidently got up for the "opera"; a portly companion in a serviceable stuff dress chaperoned her; a little boy about twelve years of age and a native girl, perhaps a trifle younger, dressed in a *sarce* of flaring red, completed the party. The little girl took her seat quite naturally with her beautiful big eyes riveted, in mute wonder, on the glories of the drop-screen, when she was rudely awakened from her fairy dreams by one of the attendants, who told her to go further back and not to sit with the *sahibs*. Very reluctantly the little girl, whose "first opera" this evidently was, retired, without withdrawing her eyes

from the stage where evidently she expected something wonderful to take place. A quarter to ten—tinkle! tinkle! tinkle! and up goes the screen to reveal to a delighted audience a sort of fairy palace-garden, where, on a comfortable sofa, lay a sleeping prince, Goolfam of Hind. Bang! and behold a fairy all in green, and glittering with tinsel, floats down from the upper air on cords, alas! too visible. The prince does not awake, and Subz Peri—for that is her name—hovers round him enamoured of his beauty. In song and dance (the slow voluptuous measure peculiar to the East) she gives expression to her tender feelings, to the accompaniment of an unseen orchestra of stringed instruments and *tablas*.

The next scene reveals the court of Indur. Seated on his throne, with courtiers and attendants about him, appears the King of Heaven, against a striking background of forked lightning, stars and suns, with the most impossible of mountain ranges that scene-painter ever put on canvas. Stiff, uncomfortable, and very much bored looked poor Indur—"one of the principal deities of heaven" according to the playbill—as he sat in state upon his tinselled throne, and it did not surprise me when he ordered a demon attendant to summon a heavenly *nautch-girl* to amuse him. Immediately there appeared, from a trap-door, a *peri* all in gauze and glittering tinsel, with enough clothing on to satisfy the most prudish taste, decked with jewellery of various sorts, amongst which tinkling anklets and wristlets were not omitted; but there were no shoes on her feet. She danced, or rather glided, with clinking anklets,

before the king to a sort of slow measure, never lifting her feet more than half an inch off the floor, swaying her body about gently and moving her uplifted arms in a graceful manner. Nothing in the world could be more in contrast than the dress, the movements, and the manner of this *bayadère* and those of a jumping ballet-dancer in silk tights on the boards of a European theatre, which contrast will not be lessened by the fact that the graceful peri was after all a man, who figures in the playbill as "Master Homi." The audience highly appreciated the peri's performance, and the King of Heaven was also so well pleased that he wanted more entertainment of the same kind, and had three other peris in succession dancing before him, the last of these being the too susceptible Subz Peri, who on her way to the court had seen Goolsam asleep in the garden. Dreary and puerile appeared to me the protracted scene, as peri after peri, introduced by trap-doors from below, came forward and sang and danced to please the King of Heaven. To my untutored ear, the measure and the music seemed always the same, and the sentiments, as far as I could understand them, not very novel. But tastes differ, and the audience, I am bound to say, viewed the performance with very different eyes from mine, and were highly pleased with it.

The glories of Indur's reception-hall gave place to a small room, in which the poor green peri, madly in love with Goolsam, persuades a demon of the court to bring the prince to her. Hardly has the demon consented to carry out her wishes, when lo! suspended in mid-air, appears the couch of the still

slumbering Goolfam. The demon awakes him, and then conceals himself. The mystified and astonished prince, lost in wonder at his new surroundings, feels, as one would feel quite naturally in the East, that he is in the toils of some magician. The green peri appears and attempts to reassure him, offering him her love in the most forward, unblushing, and disagreeable style,¹ but the prince cannot reconcile himself to his new situation, looks regretfully towards his native Hind, and repulses her with cold disdain. Learning, however, that the peri comes from Indur's court, he is carried away by a desire to see the wonders of the celestial kingdom, and promises to return the peri's affection if she will only take him there. But to introduce a mortal amongst the celestials was a serious business, beset with the gravest difficulties, and Subz Peri protests her inability to gratify his whim. To gain his point, the prince hints that far from being a peri of Indur's heaven, his admirer must be at best only the mistress of some wretched demon; an insinuation which Subz Peri resents by giving him a smart-box on the ear. In vain the peri declares that no human being could gain admittance to Indur's court; Goolfam is obdurate, and in the end Green-peri—poor enamoured peri—yields to his importunities, and conceals him in a place from which he can view the glittering spectacle he so longed to see.

¹ This is not an uncommon feature of the plays which delight a modern Indian audience. Women in love are frequently represented as pursuing the object of their passion in the most unblushing manner, notwithstanding the rudest rebuffs. See the story of *Puran Bhagat*, at the end of this paper.

Here in the midst of the usual enjoyments, the singing and dancing of the celestial *nautch-girls*, a demon attendant smells the human intruder and drags him before the king. All is now apparent to an indignantly virtuous court. The wanton peri, with wings clipped, is banished, and the Prince of Hind sentenced to pass his life in a solitary cave. In the last act everything is put right. The fame of the beauty and power of song of a certain wandering female devotee reaches King Indur, and he requests her presence at his court. She comes, and charms the god with both her person and her voice. To reward her, Indur offers her one costly gift after another, but she declines them all. He then offers to give her whatever she might ask for. "Give me Goolfam," says the happy *yoguee*, who is, of course, no other than Subz Peri, and the Prince of Hind is duly restored to her loving arms.

Of the two plays I have just described, "*Aladdin*," though Oriental in its genius and surroundings, and with a large element of the supernatural in it, was acted by men who had, I fancy, formed their style upon European models, and who accordingly introduced a good deal of vivacity and human interest into the piece. The acting and singing in "*Indur Sabha*" was dull and stately, without animation, action, or expression; but, as I have already said, unquestionably suited the taste of the audience. The music was at times decidedly pleasant even to my ears, all untrained in the mysteries of Eastern harmony. The representation closed with a melody which is certainly not without a beauty of its own, and fairly carried the audience away.

movement, squatted listlessly in his "fly swarmed sweetmeat shop" behind a few trays of uninviting confectionary; or a drowsy *bunneah*, with his knees drawn up to his chin, dozed over his uncovered heaps of rice, *dall*, *atah*, and *ghee*. These half-awake shopmen were apparently the principal, if not the only, representatives of trade in Gaya at that hour. *Charpoy*s in scores were already occupying the main thoroughfare in very unpicturesque disorder. On some of these rickety beds, unprovided with mattresses or pillows, the owners were stretched full-length; on others, two or three almost naked men sat silently fanning themselves in a drowsy way with little palm-leaf fans or with the free ends of their *dhoties*. What was the burden of their thoughts, as they sat there on these charpoy's in the hot and dusty street of the sacred city? Were they thinking, as so many of their national sages had thought before them, that, after all, life was not worth living? or were they performing that act of cogitation on the merits and defects of the British Government which Sir Richard Temple seems to think the two hundred and fifty millions of the Indian people perform every day? ¹ Not being able to divine their

¹ "It is difficult to summarize concisely what two hundred and fifty millions of people are presumably saying to themselves every day. But probably the sum of their thoughts amounts to this, that they are by the will of an unscrutable fate living under foreign rule; that they are ineffably better, nicer, pleasanter people than their rulers; that they have a purity of descent, a grandeur of tradition, an antiquity of system, with which a European nation has nothing to compare; that, despite their union, socially and morally, they cannot hold together politically, &c."—*Fortnightly Review*, January, 1883.

XI.

THE MOST SACRED SPOT ON EARTH; OR, BUDDH GAYA AND BUDDHISM.

If it were possible to ascertain, by any means, what particular spot on earth is the most sacred in the opinion of mankind, there is every reason to think that the majority of votes would be given in favour of Buddh Gaya.

Leaving the busy town of Bankipore one afternoon in April, I travelled some fifty-seven miles to Gaya, by the branch railway, over a level uninteresting looking country, unredeemed in its drear monotony except by picturesque groups of slender palm trees, which always and everywhere lend grace and beauty to the landscape they adorn.

I arrived at Gaya after dark. It was quite an early hour; but the town, with its population of 76,000 souls, was already beginning to retire to rest. The atmosphere was oppressive, and the dimly lighted streets, which were being turned into dormitories for the night, presented anything but agreeable pictures. Here and there a perspiring half-clad *hulwai*, who had not yielded to the early closing

movement, squatted listlessly in his "fly swarmed sweetmeat shop" behind a few trays of uninviting confectionary; or a drowsy *bunneah*, with his knees drawn up to his chin, dozed over his uncovered heaps of rice, *dall*, *atah*, and *ghee*. These half-awake shopmen were apparently the principal, if not the only, representatives of trade in Gaya at that hour. *Charpoys* in scores were already occupying the main thoroughfare in very unpicturesque disorder. On some of these rickety beds, unprovided with mattresses or pillows, the owners were stretched full-length; on others, two or three almost naked men sat silently fanning themselves in a drowsy way with little palm-leaf fans or with the free ends of their *dhoties*. What was the burden of their thoughts, as they sat there on these charpoys in the hot and dusty street of the sacred city? Were they thinking, as so many of their national sages had thought before them, that, after all, life was not worth living? or were they performing that act of cogitation on the merits and defects of the British Government which Sir Richard Temple seems to think the two hundred and fifty millions of the Indian people perform every day? ¹ Not being able to divine their

¹ "It is difficult to summarize concisely what two hundred and fifty millions of people are presumably saying to themselves every day. But probably the sum of their thoughts amounts to this, that they are by the will of an unscrutable fate living under foreign rule; that they are ineffably better, nicer, pleasanter people than their rulers; that they have a purity of descent, a grandeur of tradition, an antiquity of system, with which a European nation has nothing to compare; that, despite their union, socially and morally, they cannot hold together politically, &c."—*Fortnightly Review*, January, 1883.

gusting shapes, hurried to the Bo-tree. Armed with all sorts of deadly weapons, their hands and feet entwined with venomous serpents, their ugly features still more deformed by passion, their eyes red and flaming, their misshapen mouths bristling with enormous teeth and spitting forth flames and venom, the host of Mara, howling savagely, amidst a terrible war of elements, surged around Gautama on that eventful night.¹ But the demons could not daunt or even disturb the sage, against whom their weapons were powerless; their very missiles discharged against him being changed to flowers. The Evil One, foiled and disappointed, essayed to compass Gautama's defeat by other means. Instead of the deformed and terrible monsters who had threatened his personal safety, there now appeared before him, near the Bo-tree, forms of voluptuous and entrancing beauty, female forms of different ages from girlhood to ripe maturity, who endeavoured to attract his attention by the witchery of their charms. Some exposed their rounded busts and shapely forms while pretending to adjust their garments, others coquettishly veiled their beauties under diaphanous draperies. Some artful ones tried the power of flattery. Some bolder than the rest drew attention to their own charms of person, and invited the sage to share with them the delights of love. Two and thirty modes of seduction were tried by these lovely syrens, but tried in vain. All their soft wooing, all their lascivious blandishments, all their winsome

¹ The reader will hardly fail to recall to mind, and to contrast with this, Milton's description of the temptation in the wilderness.

fluences than the country which lay further westward. This Eastern, and perhaps heterodox, land became the theatre of the activities of rival religious teachers, who it would appear were, according to the fashion of the time, founders or important members of competing monastic orders. Amongst these leaders of men, who were not necessarily Brahmans, the noble Gautama attained a pre-eminent position; not to the exclusion of others, however, for a certain contemporary and rival of his, Nâtaputta, founded a sect (the Jains) which exists in India even to this day; and one of Gautama's own followers, Dewadatta, broke with his master and founded an order of his own during Buddha's lifetime.

The community in which Buddha and his contemporaries laboured had already attained its maturity. It had grown familiar with discussions on all the important problems of existence; and it is evident from the extant literature that disputatious philosophers, conceited sophists, overbearing and vain-glorious dialecticians, not slow to slander one another or use opprobrious epithets, were only too common in the time of Buddha.¹ The religious and philosophical opinions current in that land were not those which find favour with a fresh, vigorous, and progressive race, an historical people confident in themselves and in their protecting gods; but rather those which are natural to a worn-out society, only anxious for peace and rest. "The old childlike joy in life so manifest in the Vedas had died away."² The

¹ See Dr. Fausboll's "*Sutta-Nipâta*," pp. 164-174.

² Mr. Rhys Davids in "*Encyclopædia Britannica*," article Buddhism.

in previous lives have been men, or animals, or plants, or may again in future lives pass through like forms, so it is useless to look to them for assistance. True, the gods enjoy a very much longer and happier existence than men do, but the world of the gods, like the other worlds, has its limit of duration and is reorganized at the end of each *Kalpa*. Under such a system of belief the gods dwindle away into insignificance, and with the degradation of the old gods their priests necessarily sink into the background. Indeed "God and the Universe trouble not the Buddhist; he knows only one question, How shall I in this world of suffering be delivered from suffering?"¹

The morality of Buddhism is of the highest type. "It will not be deemed rash," says the Roman Catholic Bishop Bigandet, "to assert that most of the moral truths prescribed by the gospel are to be met with in the Buddhistic scriptures." It should be borne in mind, however, in this connection, that Buddha says coldly: "Let no man love anything; loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing and hate nothing have no fetters. . . . From affection comes grief, from affection comes fear; he who is free from affection knows neither grief nor fear,"² which may be wise counsel from Buddha's point of view, but is assuredly selfish, and differs from that other injunction: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." But leaving comparisons aside, the accepted Buddhist doctrine of moral retribution must have had a wholesome effect upon the life of the follower of

¹ Dr. Oldenberg's "Buddha," p. 130.

² Professor Max Muller's "Dhammapada," verses 211, 213.

Gautama, who is warned that "not in the heavens, not in the midst of the sea, not if thou hidest thyself away in the clefts of the mountains, wilt thou find a place on earth where thou canst escape the fruit of thy evil actions."¹ On the other hand, good actions as certainly brought their reward in the present or some future life; in this or some other world. But even good actions cannot relieve a man from the necessity of re-birth, though they might help him to the attainment of that frame of mind which leads to enlightenment and eventual emancipation from birth and death. Final and complete deliverance could be attained only through *Nirvana*, which (we here follow Mr. Rhys Davids) is a sinless, calm state of mind; perfect peace, goodness, and wisdom; to be followed after the natural dissolution of the body by "utter death, with no new life to follow." Professor Max Muller, while admitting that according to the Buddhist canon "*Nirvana*, the highest aim, the *summum bonum* of Buddhism, is the absolute nothing," believes that the popular view of *Nirvana* represents the original teaching of Buddha, and that according to this popular view *Nirvana* is "the entrance of the soul into rest, a subduing of all wishes and desires, indifference to joy and pain, to good and evil, an absorption of the soul in itself and a freedom from the circle of existences from birth to death, and from death to a new birth."² But an existence without wishes and desires, without joy and pain,

¹ "Dhammapada," verse 127.

² Introduction to Captain Roger's translation of Buddha-ghosha's "Parables," pp. xl, xlv. Trubner and Co., 1870.

actually taught, some four and twenty centuries ago, must ever remain doubtful matters, and doubtful too will always be the vexed question of the extent to which Christianity has been influenced by Buddhism and Buddhism by Christianity. In the absence of any reliable chronology to help us, and with a mass of legends at our disposal instead of history, we shall never be able to know, with any degree of accuracy, at what particular time special institutions, ceremonies, or creeds came into existence in the East; we shall never have any reasonable confidence in the dates assigned, by this or that scholar, to the ancient works on which we must fall back for our facts about the Eastern world; nor probably will scholars ever be able to tell us to what extent these works have undergone alteration and modification in comparatively modern times. Under such circumstances, the interesting controversy as to whether the undoubted resemblances between the Buddhist and Christian monastic systems are due to the influence of Buddhism on Christianity, or the reverse, will probably remain unfruitful in its results. Of this, however, we can assure ourselves, that primitive Buddhism was something different from, something superior to, modern Buddhism, of which, as might have been expected, there are many existing varieties. Even the stay-at-home Englishman has become familiar with the Buddhist idols in the museums, and their so-called prayer-wheels, hollow cylinders containing written prayers, which, set revolving by water power or other means, grind out the prayers of a household or a village. He will even find, in the national collections, the hideous masks used in

Ceylon¹ and elsewhere by modern Buddhists in their devil-worship; and he can see supposed sacred relics of Buddha himself in the British Museum.² The worship of relics early obtained favour in the Buddhist Church, and has not lost its fervour, if I may judge from what I saw in 1874, when I had the good fortune to witness the procession of elephants carrying, by torchlight, the supposed tooth of Buddha through the streets of the beautiful mountain town of Kandy, in Ceylon, with the usual accompaniment of drums and other equally noisy instruments of music. With respect to these worshippers of the tooth relic, a recent writer says:—"In practice the Ceylon Buddhist, among the masses, is both better and worse than his creed. Better, because instead of a distant Nirvana, or a series of births, he has before him the next birth only, which he thinks will be in heaven if he is good, and in hell if he is bad; because he calls on God in times of distress, and has a sort of faith in the One Creator, whom his priests would teach him to deny. Worse, because his real refuge is neither Buddha, nor his books, nor his order, but devils and devil-priests, and charms and astrology, and every form of grovelling superstition."³

Preparing to leave the temple about which I have been writing, I witnessed a scene which showed me how completely Hinduism had appropriated to its own use this holy place of the Buddhists, and how futile had been the teaching of Buddha to lift from off the shoulders of his countrymen the burden of

¹ British Museum, case 19-26.

² Ibid., case 155.

³ Article on Buddhism by the Bishop of Colombo in *Nineteenth Century* for July, 1888.

the Brahmanical ritual. Near the old temple two men were performing the ceremony of the *shraad*. They had come from long distances, and were both elderly men. A boy Brahman officiated. These three sat down on the ground together; the boy repeated the prescribed formularies, and from time to time took lumps of wheat-flour mixed with water from a brass plate and placed them on the ground before him. The two men repeated the words of the Brahman youth, and put little pats of flour on the ground as he did, and their ancestors had gained one more step towards the attainment of happiness.

A last look at the old temple with its new face, and then homewards. My path lay by the tombs of the *Mahants*, who had appropriated to their own use this sacred spot at Buddh Gaya. If the Buddhists are right, those defunct Mahants must still have been near me, though somewhat transformed, for Buddha-ghosha assures us that "whoever shall take for himself or for another any consecrated land, shall become a mite, or white ant, upon that consecrated land for the whole of a hundred thousand cycles." Perhaps I inadvertently crushed them under foot, only to be re-born there and then.

PART II.

I.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

IN a work published a few years ago, Mr. Talboys Wheeler wrote :

"As a matter of fact, plots and intrigues of one sort or another are the daily life of the natives of India. There are more plots and intrigues in a single establishment of native servants than in a hundred English households. An Englishman in India, who chooses to study the character of his servants, will know more in a few months of native thoughts and ways than he can learn in books from the study of a lifetime " "

No one who knows anything about the matter will hesitate to endorse this opinion, with the very necessary caution, however, that although native servants in the households of Europeans in India possess, to the full extent, the general characteristics of *their fellow-countrymen*, they form, after all, a very small class out of the vast population of the country regarding whose domestic life, whether in the hut of the peasant or the *zenana* of the gentleman, Europeans in India have little direct knowledge. At the same time it has to be borne

* Note at page 628 of Mr. Talboys Wheeler's "Short History of India." Macmillan & Co., 1880.

in mind that the native servants of Europeans in India form a class very considerably above the average of their fellow-countrymen in intelligence and experience of the world. So that however ignorant and superstitious they may appear in these pages, the bulk of the Indian people—the agricultural population—must be placed upon a decidedly lower intellectual level.

The following sketches of the domestic life of the lower orders are, in every case, based on full notes jotted down at the time at which the events described actually occurred or the anecdotes were related to me, and, whatever their value, may at least claim to embody, as accurately as possible, the facts which came under my observation.

II.

WITCHCRAFT, DEMONIACAL POSSESSION, AND OTHER SUPERSTITIONS OF THE PEOPLE.

DURING the intensely hot summer nights at Agra we were obliged to keep nearly every door and window of our *bungalow* open to let in any wandering breeze that might be about, and since thieves (and they abound in that district) might quite as easily as stray zephyrs find their way into the house, it was necessary to have a night-watchman, specially entrusted with the guardianship of the premises during the hours of darkness. The *chowkeedar*, as this watchman was called, received the sum of five rupees as his monthly wages, and lived in a small out-house in the compound. All night he was supposed to be on the look-out, taking his rounds and, according to Indian custom, uttering unearthly yells to scare away robbers. But from dawn till dewy eve his time was his own. To sleep away a good portion of the day when the rest of the world was *astir*, and to wake alone all the quiet night long, was a dull, lonely life, so one day our *chowkeedar*

they came he grovelled at their feet, begging of them to remove the curses. At first they seemed rather surprised, but, profiting by the occasion, they promised to do so, provided he paid them up in full the very next time he received his wages from me. The chowkeedar readily consented. Thereupon the woman sat down beside him, sprinkled a little water on him, made several passes over his person in a deliberate manner with a small branch of the *neem* tree, and withdrew the curses that had been piled upon his devoted head. Relieved in mind by this simple ceremony of exorcism, the sick man began to rally rapidly, and in a few days was restored to health and to his round of nightly duty.

One morning in June my coachman fell down in a fit not far from the door of the room in which I was seated. I went out to see him, and found several natives standing round the prostrate figure, but, with characteristic apathy, simply looking on without attempting to render the slightest assistance. When I suggested that they should splash some water upon his face, all of them objected on the ground that they were not of the same caste as the coachman, and therefore ought not to do it. Amongst the on-lookers was an old woman, who stated in a very positive tone that water was by no means necessary, the proper remedy for the fit being merely to take the man's shoes off his feet and make him smell them. This remedy, although curious, was not so revolting as that recommended for the "falling-sickness" in some old books of medicine, viz., "an ounce or two of the brains of a young man

carefully dried over the fire." However, the man was brought round without resorting to the old woman's specific. Inquiring later in the day, I was told that the coachman was not subject to such fits, that he had never had one before, and that it was clearly a case of witchcraft. He had been sitting in a *punchayat* (or council) of his caste-people the day before, and the person against whom he had given his vote must have cursed him. Hence these dire results. But subsequently the coachman was struck down on two or three occasions by severe and very sudden fits, and himself attributed them to the spells cast upon him by a wife who had deserted him, and who, I suspect, had not been over well treated by her lord. On my giving him notice of my intention of dispensing with his services, he assured me in the most confident manner that he would not get another fit, as he had, with the assistance of an adept, sent the demon back to take possession of and plague his wicked wife, who was the sole cause of his troubles.

On another occasion there came to my knowledge the case of a woman who attributed her illness (a severe hemorrhage) to the magic arts of a fellow-servant. According to her story the man concerned had made improper advances to her, and on her repulsing him he vowed vengeance against her. A few days after this she got ill, and found out that her enemy, as we may now call him, had gone to a well with a male companion; that they had carried with them a lemon, which they cut in halves, and, repeat-

ing some spells, squeezed out the juice of the fruit into the well, accompanying the act with the expression of a wish that the blood of so and so (naming her) might pour out as the juice had just oozed out of the lemon under the pressure of their hands. The curse, of course, had its effect, and the unfortunate woman was a miserable sufferer for her virtuous conduct. It only remains to be added that the hapless woman learnt the details above given from the wife of the man who aided her enemy and quondam lover in carrying out the mischievous and wicked rites which cost her so dear.

Not only have the powerful spells of the wicked to be dreaded; the dead are not less capable of resenting any neglect or affront, and when offended have to be duly propitiated by gifts and offerings. A servant of mine at Lahore had been absent from his duties for some days on account of ill-health. Inquiring into his condition and the treatment he had been receiving, I learned that he had, a few days previously, been prostrated by an attack of fever. On the second day of his illness he was, apparently, delirious, and in that state revealed the fact that his fever was due to his having pulled down some branches from a *babool* tree (*Acacia Arabica*) which grew over a Syud's grave just outside my compound. It was a miserable dilapidated structure this Syud's grave, but the dead occupant was none the less jealous of its honour. According to the sick man the Syud had taken possession of him, and was wreaking his vengeance upon him for having dared to dishonour his shrine. Something had to be done to

appease the irate saint, and so the invalid's afflicted wife caused a *mussuk* (leather bag) of water to be poured over the Syud's grave, apparently to cool his temper. At the same time a fellow-servant, skilled in such matters, administered a charmed clove to the patient in order to break the spell which had been cast upon him by the indignant Syud. But the invalid, instead of improving, became worse, and in his delirium the spirit of the Syud, which had now taken full possession of him, kept uttering through the mouth of the fever-stricken man such contemptuous remarks as these—"Oh, indeed! you have eaten a charmed clove, have you? I will give you a stomach full of charmed cloves!"

The unsuccessful exorcist was called in to try another spell, but as, after the clove episode, the efficacy of his spells appeared somewhat doubtful, the precaution was also taken of endeavouring to pacify the Syud with gifts. He was promised a *cheragh*, or light, upon his tomb, for a certain number of successive Thursday evenings, with an offering of sweetmeats in addition, if he would but forgive the offender. Still the invalid did not mend, and his wife was making up her mind to promise the Syud a more worthy peace-offering (a cock or a kid) if he would only restore her husband to health, when I became acquainted with the particulars of the case, and recommended her to postpone her vow of a costly offering till she had first tried the effects of sulphate of quinine. I gave her some of the drug with directions how to use it. She followed my instructions, and, to her great satisfaction, found that the bitter white powder had the power either of expelling the

goats and five cocks on the Syud's grave. She did not die and did not fulfil her vow, so the angry Syud was now victimizing the husband, presumably as the responsible head of the house.

This supposed possession of *mehlers* by the spirits of deceased descendants of the Prophet of Arabia seems to indicate a strange confusion in the religion of the lower castes in India, though the spiritual anarchy in the present case is easily accounted for, being due, most probably, to a growing respect for Islam, a consequent recognition of the potency of the Mussulman saints, and an imitation of certain Muhammadan practices to be described later on. But the ordinary Mussulmans of India, almost as deeply tainted by caste prejudices as their Hindu fellow-countrymen, do not take this view of the matter; and when consulted about it, usually aver indignantly that no Syud's spirit would demean itself to enter a *mehler's* body, but that men of that despicable caste, when possessed, must be under the influence of some *BIUT* (devil) of their own.

One morning the dead body of a large and venomous snake, which had been killed near the servants' quarters the night before, was brought to me. It appeared that the cold clammy weight of the horrid reptile upon her neck had roused a woman who was sleeping in the open air at the door of one of the out-houses. Instinctively, she flung the snake off, and immediately called for help. Her brother-in-law, the *dhoby* or washerman, ran to her help, and despatched the intruder with a stick. On the follow-

ing day the dhoby was taken ill, and his work got into arrears. I wanted to know what was the matter with the man, and found out that his illness was due solely to his having neglected to give the customary funeral feast in memory of his deceased wife, who had died in her native village some months previously. The snake which had visited the servants' quarters was none other than the late wife herself, and had come to wreak her vengeance on the woman, who, it would appear, had stood very much in the way of the funeral feast, and was, moreover, responsible for the neglect which the deceased had experienced during her lifetime. Somehow, and for unknown reasons, the Fates had protected the offending sister-in-law, but the neglectful husband was suffering the punishment of his sins of omission and commission, and it was quite clear that it would go hard with him if he did not very soon make amends for his past misconduct. The first thing to be done was to *rescue the sufferer from the vindictive clutches of the spirit of the departed wife*. An exorcist was called in, and immediately commenced operations. In the open air, beside the bed of the sick man, he placed a lighted *cheragh*, or lamp, and just before it, drew on the ground a small circle about three inches across, with two diameters at right angles to each other. He put a couple of cloves at one end of each diameter. Outside the circle he laid a few more cloves and also three small packets, one containing flowers, another camphor, and the third incense. Standing up, with his face turned to the full moon, which was just rising, the exorcist rubbed an open penknife between his hands and kept uttering some-

thing which was meant for magical words or incantatory phrases. He then applied the blade to his forehead and sat down, still muttering to himself in a low tone. He next passed the cloves round and over the flame of the lamp. After which he gashed his own arm with the penknife, and collecting the blood on the blade, wet the cloves with it. Next he took all the cloves in his right hand and, closing his fist, passed it, heavily and slowly, over the sick man, beginning from a little above the knee and going gradually up to and round the head, as if drawing or gathering something up towards the top of the head. Whenever the invalid groaned, and he did so pretty often, partly from excitement and partly, no doubt, from the pain experienced under the rough treatment of his physician, the latter expressed his satisfaction, and seemed to coax the spirit to come out. Sometimes the spirit which had taken possession of the sick man would, as it were, struggle under the grasp of the exorcist, and seem as if about to slip away from him. At this his ire would be roused, and, apparently much excited, he would address the enemy in no complimentary terms, while he himself groaned and puffed as if in a severe and exhausting conflict. At length the spirit was safely conducted to the crown of the invalid's head, and was then successfully drawn out of him.

After the completion of this satisfactory operation, the exorcist offered the cloves to the bystanders, but they prudently declined the proffered gifts, objecting to be made the recipients of the sick man's cast-out spirit. After some wrangling, the exorcist determined to retain the cloves himself, and con-

cluded the ceremony by burning some camphor in the flame of the lamp.

The personal appearance of the exorcist was anything but prepossessing. He looked from the very commencement of his proceedings wild and excited, but during his struggles with the refractory spirit he was like a madman.

The reader familiar with the customs of savages, as described by travellers, and reproduced in most modern works on "the primitive condition of man," will at once recognize in our exorcist the *medicine-man* of savage countries, of the wilds of South America, the islands of the Pacific Ocean, of Australia and Africa; but he seems peculiarly out of place in India, in contact with English civilization, and in the broad light of the nineteenth century. However, in India he is, and, I doubt not, will long continue there, sharing with native and European drugs, the credit of driving away disease and of restoring the sick to health and strength.

Not only is exorcism commonly practised for the cure of the sick; but also for the relief of sufferers from the effects of snake bites, the bites of dogs or the stings of venomous insects and other animals.

A female servant attracted my attention one night, by her loud cries. She had been stung on the foot by something in the dark—a scorpion she said—and was apparently in great pain. Her first thought was to obtain the assistance of a man who happened to be living in my compound, and was well-skilled in affording relief in such cases. My aid not being required, I did not interfere. The man whose services were in request came as soon as he was

summoned, and began making sundry passes over the wound, in order, as he said, "to bring the pain down;" but instead of coming down it went on extending higher up the limb. The woman evidently suffered a good deal. At this stage something like the following colloquy took place:—

Woman (sharply): "What are you about? The pain instead of coming down is going up, higher and higher. Oh dear! oh dear!"

Man: "Wait a bit; mother; be a little patient."

Woman (apparently not relishing the advice): "Be patient! you say. Be patient! while the pain is extending higher up. Oh! ma: oh! ma-go."

Man: "Yes, mother, yes!"

Woman (testily): "Why do you say 'yes, yes?' I want the pain to come down."

Man (naïvely): "Of course, mother; but the pain must first be allowed to go up, and then I'll bring it down."

Woman (fairly enraged): "Be off, you fool! Bad luck to you," &c., &c. "I'll go and ask the *sahib* for some medicine."

All the subjects of demoniacal possession referred to in the preceding pages belonged to the lowest castes of the Indian community, which lie practically outside the pale of Hinduism. Amongst them the belief in demoniacal passion is in full force to-day, although it is by no means confined to them. The air is pervaded by magic and witchcraft. The happiness, the health, the very lives of men, are at the mercy of spells and counter-spells. Ay, and the very gods themselves are not exempt from the influ-

ence of magical rites ; but must obey the behests of the powerful magician.

Syuds, being lineal descendants of the great Prophet of Arabia, have, as we have already seen, special influence on the fate of men, but they by no means enjoy a monopoly of power for good or evil over the living. The disembodied spirit of any man or woman may become troublesome or dangerous. A deceased wife is particularly to be dreaded by her successor.

A female servant alluding to the death of a man's third wife, remarked to me that such things always occurred amongst the wretched Muhammadans, but that people of her caste avoided dangers of that sort. She explained that the death of the second and subsequent wives was usually caused by the spirit of the first wife, whose jealous spite brought them to an untimely end. To avert danger from this quarter the spirit of the deceased wife had to be propitiated, and it was customary amongst her people to do it in this wise. The likeness of a woman done in silver (known as a *thuppa*) was worn as a locket by the second wife. This image represented the first wife, and had to be constantly propitiated. At every meal the second wife offered a pinch of food to the "*thuppa*," before she herself began to eat, and when she was about to put on new-clothes or ornaments the second wife first offered them in due form to the "*thuppa*." Appeased and gratified by these attentions, the spirit of the first wife was won over to spare her successor.

There appears to be a kind of possession known

amongst the Muhammadans in India. The symptoms are these. Some man, usually one of blameless life and strict habits, is selected by a departed Pir or Syud as the vehicle for conveying his wishes to the living. The entry of the saint's spirit into the body of his chosen vessel is accompanied with violent convulsions. The man possessed of the spirit is thrown into a state of uncontrollable agitation. He foams at the mouth, and usually tosses his head from side to side, or up and down, in a frantic manner. At length he speaks, asserting energetically that he is some Pir or other, and demanding that a certain offering shall be made at his grave, which seems to be all the Pir cares about. The awe-stricken bystanders promise everything required, and the spirit departs, leaving his medium in a state of much physical prostration. I have had personal knowledge of several cases of this kind.

The 24th of November, 1886, being a Muhammadan festival, I paid a visit to the shrine of Dada Gunge Baksh at Lahore. I found a large concourse of people seated near the outer wall of the shrine in the open air. Three musicians, two playing on stringed instruments and one on a drum, were singing away lustily a hymn in praise of the saint. Several greybeards sat in a sort of solemn abstraction close to the wall, while a middle-aged man, dressed in green, with a string of beads round his neck, occupied a prominent position a little in front of the elders. The congregation and onlookers, consisting of two or three hundred persons, sat huddled together on *durries* or carpets in the foreground. As

the music went on with a peculiar sort of throb, one here and another there from the midst of the congregation seemed convulsed, as if by galvanic shocks. Presently their movements became more energetic and violent. In one case a man threw himself forward, resting, in a crouching position, on his hands and knees. He swayed his head in a frantic manner from side to side, and it was a marvel to me how it escaped collision with the ground. But escape it did. Exhausted at length by the wild energy of his movements, the man fell in a fit upon the ground. One of his companions now came forward and began to *shampoo* his limbs, in order, I presume, to calm the excitement of his overwrought nerves. Another man, after the usual premonitory convulsions, writhed on the ground in wild contortions. Two men rushed forward, apparently to prevent him from hurting himself, and holding him up by the waist, allowed him to fling himself backwards and forwards in the wildest manner possible. Several other men became excited and convulsed under the influence of the Pir, but all the cases of possession I noticed could be referred to one or other of the types I have just described. None of the *convulsionnaires* uttered a single word throughout the proceedings. On a previous occasion I visited one of the favourite places for the exhibition of such manifestations. On reaching the ground, I found several persons congregated round a boy of about ten years of age, who appeared to be in a semi-unconscious state. This poor little fellow had been hanging, I don't know for how long, suspended head downwards from the branch of a tree. In this uncomfortable position he

had been swaying himself about in a sort of frenzy, and had almost lost consciousness before he was taken down. His father and other friends who were present on the spot assured me that no harm could come to any one taken possession of by the spirit of the Pir sahib. A tailor in my service, a weakly lad with a very queer look about his eyes, used to be a favourite of some Pir or other. He was fond of attending assemblies such as I have described, would readily fall into the ecstatic state, and died very young. As contributions are expected from those who frequent assemblies of the kind just described, it is evident that the guardians of the shrines where they take place reap a substantial advantage, but it is not easy to see what benefit the poor fellows get who may be called the performers on these occasions. They have themselves told me that in the ecstatic state they are unconscious of the world around them, and have the very gates of paradise opened to them.

In India we live in a world which is accustomed to receive supernatural visitants who associate familiarly with men. We are, indeed, still in the age of the "Arabian Nights." A holy Mussulman faquir, who enjoyed a considerable local reputation, told me of his own experiences with a *jīn*. The Jin, in human form, used to visit him, but always came with a green shade over his eyes, as if suffering from sore-eyes. He represented himself as a devotee who, attracted by the fame of my informant, had come to sit at his feet. He was assiduous in his attentions, and one day asked my friend if he knew who he was. On

receiving a reply to the effect that the faquir knew nothing about him beyond what he had himself stated, he said he was in reality a Jin. My friend received the statement with incredulity. Not long after this being disturbed in his devotions by the noisy chattering of two *minas*, my informant asked his disciple to drive them away, when what was his surprise to find the pretended devotee put forth his hand and catch the birds although they were ten or twelve feet above his head. Another time the Jin, to oblige him, caught a young fox by simply putting out his foot and placing it upon its neck. The Jin continued to wear the green shade, because he wished to escape being recognized by that well-known peculiarity of Jins, their inability to wink. During his sojourn with the faquir the Jin fell out with one of the persons, a *chupprasee*, who was in the habit of visiting the holy man, and having been abused by his adversary caused the death of his children, by literally passing into the poor fellow's house, through closed doors, and strangling his unoffending infants. The mother, in great distress, came and complained to the faquir about the cruel wrong she had suffered. The holy man suggested that she should go for redress to the law courts, but she explained that it was a case of magic, and not one with which the magistrates could deal. On this the faquir reproved the Jin, and desired him to discontinue his visits; but the Jin promised better behaviour in future, and, to make amends for the murder he had committed, promised to give the object of his anger—the father of the strangled babes—whatever he asked for, provided he never told

any one how he came by it. The aggrieved father looked upon this as *une mauvaise plaisanterie*; but one day being in sore need of four rupees, he held out his cloth and called upon the Jin to fulfil his promise. Immediately four rupees fell into his cloth. After this he asked for several other things and received them; but one of the prying women of his household having found out how the money came, made a boast of it to some of her friends. The spell was broken. Nothing more was ever received, and the Jin, enraged at his secret having been made public, destroyed two more members of the chupprasee's family. At the faquir's very urgent and positive request, the Jin at length made himself scarce. Every word of this wonderful story the holy faquir assured me was *absolutely true*.

As a general rule, natives of India of all classes believe in the reality of possession, demoniacal or otherwise. They unhesitatingly admit that some favoured men and women are chosen as the media of communication between departed saints and the human race; but they are not equally ready to recognize the validity of the pretensions of particular individuals. In fact there is often an odd mixture of superstition and shrewed scepticism—or shall I say suspiciousness?—in the Indian character. I well remember a Mussulman telling me, with a good deal of humour and self-satisfaction, the following story. A Pathan from beyond the western border had arrived in his neighbourhood. The rumour went abroad that at times the spirits of certain departed Syuds descended upon the Muslim visitor, or, as the native expression

back. Without replying to the question, the child observed that he himself was quite ready to answer any questions the stranger desired to put. The angel asked where Gabriel was at that time. After a short pause, the boy replied with a thoughtful expression on his face, "I have scanned the four quarters of the universe, even to the throne of the Almighty, but no Gabriel could I find. Therefore, either I am or you are Gabriel." The messenger departed in astonishment, and carried to heaven a report of his mission; upon which the Almighty decreed that the guilty city, with its inhabitants and its thousands of volumes of unhallowed lore, should be whelmed in one common ruin. A troop of angels was sent to overturn the city from its very foundations, and bury it with its inhabitants for ever. There escaped, however, from the general destruction, a stray leaf or two of the books of divination, and on the imperfect hints derived from these, the modern sciences of magic and astrology have been reared during a succession of ages.

On the superstitions of the people of India volumes might be written; for India is still where Europe was in the dark ages, and belief in witchcraft, demoniacal possession, the transmutation of metals, the efficacy of charms, spells, and love-filtres, is quite general amongst all classes of the people. Let me add a few instances to those already given.

Not long ago a native, referring to the wasting disease (marasmus) from which an infant seemed to be suffering, assured me that even the shadow of the little child falling upon one in health might prove fatal to the latter. The disease, he said, might in

some cases be cured at the expense of the vegetable world; for example, it was well known that if a child suffering from marasmus were taken into a sugar-cane field, there undressed and bathed, and its cast-off clothes left on the ground, the child might recover, but in that case the *sugar-cane would all be blighted*. I subsequently learned another mode of curing the disease. The mother of the sufferer should secure a black dog and decapitate it in the dead of night. She should then boil its head in water, and bathe herself and child in this broth, exactly at the hour of midnight.

During an excessively dry summer, as I was sitting one evening in the open air, the clouds began gathering rapidly overhead. Every one was anxiously looking out for rain. The sultry heat had caused an outbreak of sickness, and the price of food had gone up considerably. I remarked to a native standing beside me that we would now in all probability have the much desired rain. He looked up towards the dark overcast sky above, and then shaking his head doubtfully, expressed his fear that the rascally *bunneahs*—vendors of food-grains and other articles of consumption—would not let it rain. The idea was a new one to me. I was familiar with the old Hindu notion that the dark clouds are malicious demons who obstruct or intercept the rainfall, and are only overcome by Indra's flashing thunderbolts, which rend them asunder in the interests of the human race and the parched and gaping earth. But I had never heard that the *bunneahs* were credited with meteorological powers

perienced, and, perhaps, became stiff-necked and obstinate; for eventually her mother-in-law pronounced her incorrigible. Domestic peace being impossible under the circumstances, her husband turned her adrift, leaving Lahore at the same time to avoid being called to account for his conduct by the *panchayat* of his caste.

The *bunneah* had not been paid a single fraction of the sum originally borrowed from him, though he had managed to extort a respectable amount of money under the name of interest. Ghusseetah, the surety, was warned that as the principal had absconded, he would be required to pay up to the uttermost *couric*. Already in the toils of the *bunneah* on account of other transactions, and often, when short of cash, dependent upon him for the bare necessaries of life, the poor man acknowledged his obligations and humbly promised to pay. But was there no compensation to be had for the loss occasioned by the base ingratitude of his defaulting friend? He pondered the matter, and struck upon the idea of boldly annexing the girl who was the innocent cause of his indebtedness. He told her that as her husband had absconded without paying the money, and had left him solely responsible to the *bunneah* for the amount where-with she had been purchased from her guardians, she was now his (Ghusseetah's) property. The argument appeared unanswerable, and, fully persuaded of the justice and lawfulness of this conclusion, the young woman accompanied her new master to his home, and was in due course made over to the tender mercies of his wife. The slave thus acquired—for

slave she practically was, be the law of the land what it may—had now to do all the household work of a large and very poor family. In such a position her duties were by no means light. She had to fetch water for domestic purposes, grind corn into flour for the daily consumption of the whole family, prepare the meals, wash the pots and pans, sweep the room and at any rate once a week plaster it over with a mixture of clay and cow-dung, and last, though not least, she had to look after the little ones. Hers was one incessant round of toil, and although recognized as a member of the household and entitled to a share of food, she had to wear rags, to endure the angry vituperation of her mistress, and often the blows of the children, who did not fail to remind her of her servile condition.

When Ghusseetah and his wife entered my service as sweeper and ayah respectively, they were the owners of the slave girl. They took up their abode in a room in my servants' quarters or out-offices. The room was about eight or nine feet square. It had one entrance-door, and on the opposite side a little window, with strong wooden bars across it. At this time the family consisted of a son, about eleven years of age, and his child wife; two younger boys, an infant in arms, and the slave, whose age was probably not more than seventeen or eighteen. In my compound the family lived quietly enough, and we had no knowledge of the peculiar position the young woman occupied in the ayah's household. The debt, however, still remained unpaid, and the *bunneah* threatened legal proceedings.

Although no beauty, the household drudge was

young ; and youth, clothed even in dirty rags, has its attractions for the opposite sex. A tender feeling for the girl sprang up in the impressionable heart of her master, an elderly grey-headed man, with a rather gaunt appearance. Certain indiscretions on his part aroused ayah's suspicions. She thereupon, unknown to her husband, suggested to the bunneah that he should arrange, if possible, to pass the young woman on to some man or other who would engage to take over the debt. The bunneah, who had probably been paid a portion of the interest on the money advanced by him, found a willing bachelor, and arranged the matter satisfactorily. But now a curious difficulty arose — Ghusseetah was not as willing as his wife that the young woman should leave his house. He threw what obstacles he could in the way of the final conclusion of the new arrangement. He did not approve of the future husband, he did not feel sure that the bargain was a safe one. Matters had, however, under his wife's guidance, advanced too far to be easily set aside. The girl was made over to her new lord, who, when he came to conduct her home, brought a gaudy suit of clothes for her. Arrayed in her new finery, and escorted by a small party of friends, she went off cheerfully to her new lord's home, and the fate that might be in store for her there.

On the young woman's departure Ghusseetah broke down completely. He refused to eat or drink, and became reduced to a veritable skeleton. Disconsolate and down-hearted, he wrapped his ex-slave's ragged and dirty sheet about his loins, took a staff in his hand, and wandered forth alone, threatening to

go away for ever to some distant land. When he thus cast domestic life behind him and started forth on his tramp, his poor wife and children followed him crying bitterly, and begging of him to come back. The loud lamentations of the deserted family attracted my attention, and from a window I observed the pathetic scene, to which the distraught manner and unusual garb of my generally very sober and orderly servant gave no slight tincture of absurdity. I did not at the moment know what was the matter, and suspected a conjugal difference of a more or less trifling kind. Regardless of the entreaties of his wife and children, Ghusseetah went his way. At night, however, he returned home; but not to eat or to drink. He threw himself down on the bare ground, with only the ex-slave's cast-off rags as a pillow. This display of tender feeling was too much for the long-suffering wife. She snatched up the rags, flung them on the fire and burnt them to ashes, while, in Indian fashion, she heaped curses upon her ex-slave, her parents, grand-parents, forefathers, and upon her unborn descendants. Ghusseetah, on his part, refused to be consoled without Subratun, whose name he kept repeating in his sleep. There was no sham about it; the man was evidently quite unhinged. In the day he used to wander about disconsolate; at night he would come home to a restless bed. He gradually got so weak and ill that his family became alarmed for his safety. He told his wife and children that now the end was at hand, all he wished them to do for him was to follow him to the grave, and to deposit in it his favourite hookah and two pounds of good tobacco.

However, he did not die. With time he recovered his senses. He no longer refused food, and gradually got as strong as he had formerly been. But now comes another curious feature of the case. He solemnly averred that he had no recollection of what he had said or done in the matter of Subratun. He protested that he had been bewitched by some enemy, who had given him poison to eat, and had made him ridiculous in the eyes of everybody. He could not be prevailed upon to acknowledge his own responsibility for his sayings and doings; stoutly maintaining that he had been under evil influences and not his own master.

When Ghusseetah got mad—as his wife called it—and could not do his work, I inquired into the circumstances of the case, and then, without any difficulty or cross-questioning, learnt all the particulars detailed above. I was careful to note down immediately the facts as they were communicated to me, for they seemed to afford a glimpse of the inner life of the people which might be as interesting to others as it was to me.

THIEF-CATCHING.

THIEF-CATCHING carried out in a thoroughly Indian way has its peculiarities not devoid of interest.

Fifteen rupees had been abstracted out of a box in my study. I called my servants together, made know the loss, and threatened a police investigation. What such an inquiry involved the servants were well aware. The faces of those upon whom, from the nature of their duties, suspicion would naturally fall, showed only too well that their imaginations were already busy, conjuring up the disgraceful scene in which the native constables would endeavour to elicit the truth from them, literally at the point of the baton, dug into their unfortunate sides. The magistrate and his sentence upon the offender are secondary considerations in these cases. It is the preliminary police investigation that is most dreaded. I had not the slightest intention of handing my servants over to the tender mercies of the constables. My threat was merely intended to frighten out a confession, if possible, and I willingly acceded to a proposal, made by one or two of the servants, to investigate the matter themselves.

After performing certain religious ablutions, the cook, a grave Mussulman much respected in the household, produced a shoe, into the inside of which he stuck a shoemaker's awl, and with this instrument proceeded with great solemnity to the detection of the thief. The names of the several servants were written upon separate scraps of paper. The cook and one other man, acting jointly, lifted the shoe, each man applying only one finger under the round head of the handle of the awl. Suspended in this way, the scraps of paper with the servants' names were dropped into the shoe in succession, and it was well understood by all present that when the thief's name was put into the shoe it would turn round in a horizontal plane. It turned very distinctly at the name of a certain servant, and, as might have been expected, the result was received by him with anything but satisfaction. However, he was a Hindu, and affected to believe that this Mussulman mode of thief-catching was not quite fair, at any rate to Hindus, and it was agreed that a reference should be made on the subject to a Brahman in the city, whose verdict would be considered conclusive. Next day the Brahman was 'appealed to. He went through a form of divination, and then oracularly declared that the thief was a man, not a woman, that he was more than thirty and less than forty years of age, and so on. He very impressively affirmed his ability to lay hands on the thief there and then, but he refrained from doing so, advising the culprit to restore the money within the next two days, otherwise he would expose him and let the law take its course. The Brahman's descrip-

tion of the thief did to some extent tally with that of the man already pointed out by the cook's divining shoe, and confirmed the suspicion against him. Next morning the suspected man came and informed me that the money was in the inner pocket of the broadcloth coat worn by a fellow-servant, a boy of about fourteen years of age. The boy was called, ostensibly to perform some ordinary duty, and upon being suddenly asked what was in his pocket, appeared ready to drop with fear. Seven rupees were found in his pocket, and many were the stories he told in regard to the manner in which he had come into possession of them ; but he at last affirmed, and stuck to the assertion, that they had been given to him for safe custody by the suspected man, who declared his intention of replacing them in the box whence he had abstracted them as soon as a favourable opportunity presented itself. Anyhow, between the shoe and the Brahman, the thief or thieves—for I believe the pair were confederates—were detected, and a portion at least of the missing money recovered with little trouble.

VII.

A YOUTHFUL SAINT.

ATTRACTED by the voices of some people passing my window, and especially noticing a high treble voice, like that of a child, speaking in rather more authoritative tones than his years seemed to justify, I looked out and saw a small boy of about twelve years of age, dressed in clean clothes, attended by several of my servants, all apparently most attentive to him. One man, of whom he inquired where his mangoes were, ran off at once, apparently to fetch them, but really to purchase some in the bazaar. The youthful centre of this little group was sauntering in a very leisurely manner towards the gate, conversing with his companions, when suddenly, in the most capricious manner, he turned round and took an opposite direction towards the out-offices at the back of the house. His full face was now in view, and struck me strongly as being very wanting in intelligence, if not bearing visible traces of insanity.

The boy had been living in my out-houses for two or three days. He had come in there of his own accord, and was being feasted and fêted to the full extent of their means by my poor but ever improvi-

dent domestics, who were never tired of supplying his wants or humouring his caprices: for, it would seem, the boy was a remarkable person, one especially favoured by Allah.

In his native village near Gujranwallah, his father had recently been engaged in erecting the mud walls of a hut for himself. His humble, if useful, work required a plentiful supply of water, and this the owner of the well hard by absolutely refused to give him. Without water the work could not be carried on. The builder was in great perplexity, when his young son came to his rescue with words of comfort, telling him that what his fellow-man refused Allah would give freely; and so saying, he planted his little foot down vigorously on the ground, out of which a spring of fresh water instantly welled up, and continues flowing to this day. So remarkable an event could not fail to attract attention. The spring became famous all through the neighbourhood. Visitors from near and far flocked to see it. It became a place of pilgrimage. The water was found to have wonderful curative power. Even leprosy was cured by bathing in it, and quantities were stored and carried away for the benefit of sufferers unable to come to the holy spot, where Allah had so remarkably manifested His power and His beneficent remembrance of the wants of the poor. One miserable-leper, cured of his disease at the spring, carried away some of the water to Amritsar and sold it there to another sufferer from the same grievous affliction. The purchaser was duly restored to a sound condition by the use of the water; but alas, the mercenary vendor of God's precious, but freely given, gift of

as every precaution which common sense would suggest. Deserted by her husband, and cruelly ill-used by her mother-in-law even when the chill hand of death was unmistakably upon her, the poor girl died as a dog might die, uncared for and *alone*. Often had she been heard to wish herself dead, and to console herself with the thought that she would return as a *choorail* to persecute and destroy her tyrant, relying upon a widely spread superstition, which sometimes has the wholesome effect of restraining, in some degree, the hand of the domestic oppressor. But in the case I am writing about the vengeance of the poor dead woman was completely and effectually guarded against by means of *appropriate ceremonies*. At the various halting places to the grave mustard seed had been scattered about, and a few iron tacks had been driven into the ground with the prayer that the spirit of the deceased might not be permitted to disturb the living. The ghost of the injured woman might haunt the graveyard, but in seeking its former earthly habitation it would have to retrace the road along which its corpse had been borne. Here it would always find a spiritual garden of mustard plants, and, beguiled into collecting the flowers, would lose the precious hours of the night, and be forced by approaching dawn to hasten back to the land of the dead.